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One charter school's fight against the education establishment

Christian Rock
A comic tour inside the world of religious pop

Teen-Demon Tracts
Why baby boomers fear their children

The Media and GI Joe
How the press gets the military wrong—and why it matters

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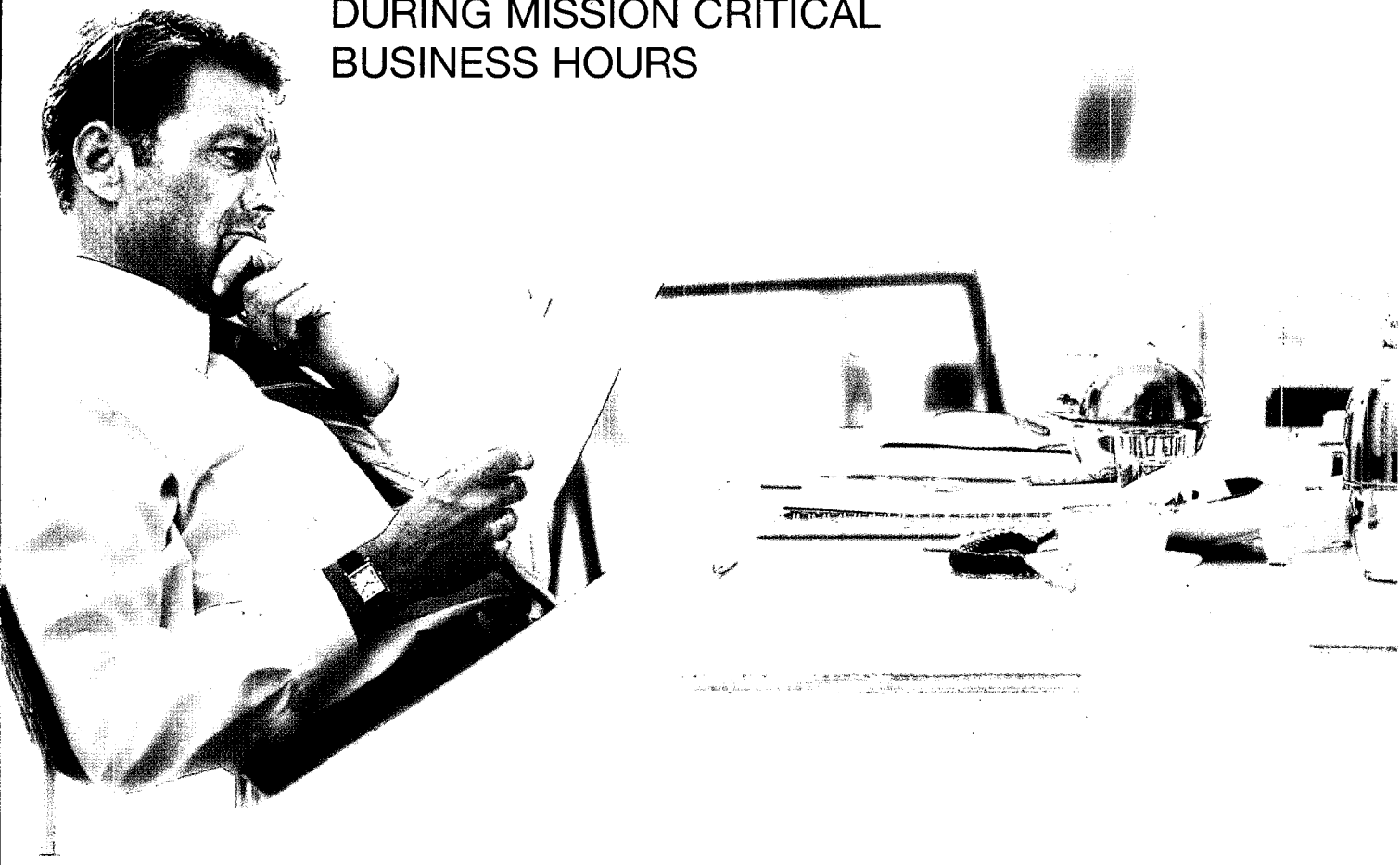

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Cover Photo: GI Joe Roy P. Benavidez, courtesy of Hasbro

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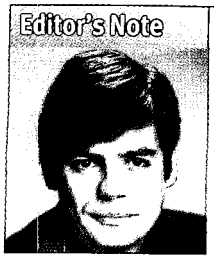

"WRITE WHAT YOU know" is the standard—and useful—advice given to all budding fiction writers. Unfortunately, that bit of wisdom is often lost on journalists and can lead to stories that are at best woefully uninformed and at worst wildly inaccurate.

This month's cover story, "The Media and GI Joe" (page 22), looks at how such ignorance plays out with regard to the armed forces. "Reporters who cover the military...don't just muff a few basic facts about what kind of soldier carries what kind of gun, or which service does what," writes Chris Bray. "They also fail to apply the right skepticism in the right places, or even the right credulity in the right places, and so end up swinging in a wild arc between breathless adulation and naive condemnation. They surrender many of the necessary tools for questioning the authority of the armed forces, and render nearly useless the check and the balance of the Fourth Estate on a major power of government. They create confidence where there should be wariness, and fear where there should be strength."

Anyone who surveys the evening yak shows —where the Ashleighs and the Geraldos have traded in their civvies for camo wear—has a strong sense of what Bray is talking about. His experience as an infantryman explains why he can draw a bead so authoritatively on reporters who are impressed to learn that soldiers occasionally train with live ammo.

His firsthand knowledge also allows him to dig deeper and expose how the military itself is a captive of its own mangled internal communications. The result is chilling to ponder as we gear up for the next stage of the war on terror: We've got "a national security infrastructure that is stuck in such a deep rut that it knows about the cliff but can't turn the steering wheel to avoid it," writes Bray, who quotes an analyst certain that only "the experience of defeat" can change the status quo.

The other articles in this issue similarly benefit from deep knowledge. On a lighter note, consider Contributing Editor Peter Bagge's irreverent yet affectionate comic about Christian rock (page 48). Where other self-declared "secular humanists" might simply disparage a religious musical idiom, Bagge charts how Christian performers filched popular forms back in the 1920s, lost control of the process, and eventually ended up influencing secular rock and pop. The result is a delightfully twisted—and unending—tale of cultural appropriation.

In "Teen-Demon Tracts," an essay about new parenting books (page 52), Chris Lehmann deflates hysteria about contemporary teens by turning to the relevant social science (and his own past as something of a juvenile delinquent). "As almost no media outlet is going to tell you, kids these days are astonishingly well-adjusted, nonviolent, educated, and polite," writes Lehmann. "Hell, even teen literacy is increasing."

Something similar is at the heart of Science Correspondent Ronald Bailey's positive review of Bjorn Lomborg's controversial new book, *The Skeptical Environmentalist* (page 58). Bailey, the author of 1993's *Ecoscam: The False Prophets of Environmental Apocalypse* (St. Martin's), notes that the real beef against Lomborg is that he hews too closely to observable reality for his critics. Lomborg's sin is documenting that global life expectancy is up, food prices are down (as is air pollution in the developed countries), and deforestation rates have been wildly exaggerated.

None of this is to suggest that "facts"—famously stubborn as they may be—provide the last word in any argument, analysis, or dispute. But certainly we all benefit from writers who use them as their starting point.

Nick Gillespie

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Contributors

Chris Bray

Joanne Jacobs

Chris Lehmann

After two years and 17 weeks as an infantryman, CHRIS BRAY emerged from his barracks in Fort Benning, Georgia, to write this issue's cover story, which begins on page 22. "The Media and GI Joe" documents a revolution in the armed forces—and the media's near-total ignorance of it. Bray, a 33-year-old Los Angeles native, enlisted expressly so that he could write authoritatively about military issues. "I felt obligated," he explains, noting a growing disconnect between soldiers and the country they serve. "So I rolled up my sleeves and packed a suitcase full of notebooks." A former local news reporter, Bray is now studying history at Pitzer College.

After 22 years, JOANNE JACOBS left the *San Jose Mercury News* to do what most would dread: She went back to high school. In this issue, she offers "Threatened by Success" (page 38), which describes the vicious turf war between San Francisco's Edison Charter Academy and the local school board. Her book-in-progress, *Start-Up High*, documents another charter school, San Jose's fledgling Downtown College Prep, where she's volunteered since January 2001. Says Jacobs, "There are times when it drives you nuts to see how weak the students are after years in schools that couldn't meet their needs." She frequently discusses education in her feisty weblog, readJacobs.com.

"I'm a high-school dropout," says CHRIS LEHMANN, who tears into two new books that aim to soothe parents living in mortal terror of their teenaged progeny. (See "Teen-Demon Tracts," page 52.) Lehmann isn't a parent himself—perhaps in part because he remembers all too well his own rebellious, antisocial adolescence in Davenport, Iowa. Now 40, married, and working as a senior editor at *The Washington Post Book World*, Lehmann appears to have turned out OK, no doubt to his parents' and teachers' astonishment. He has written for a long roster of publications that includes *The Baffler*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, *Newsday*, *In These Times*, and the *San Francisco Examiner*.

REASON
ANTITRUST'S GREATEST HITS
The foolish precedents behind the Microsoft case
By David B. Kopel & Joseph Bast
WHY THE RADICAL LEFT SOLD OUT
Q&A with Christopher Hitchens
THE ROTTEN BEEF AGAINST FAST FOOD

Letters are welcome and should be addressed to

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Anti-Antitrust

Hurray to Joseph Bast and David B. Kopel for their common sense on the Microsoft case ("Antitrust's Greatest Hits," November).

As one who writes for the computer industry and consumers, I find it's often necessary to underscore a really obvious point about this case: Every single customer of every single Microsoft product has alternatives. Apple sells computers and operating systems, as does Sun. Numerous versions of Linux and the BSD operating system are available *for free* to those who would rather not use Windows. Lotus, Sun, and Corel sell competing office suite products.

In contrast to other purported monopolies, such as Alcoa or Standard Oil, Microsoft has no ability to constrain supply in their market. If I wrote an operating system and everyone in the world wanted to buy it, I could set up an Internet site from which people could download it. Microsoft could do nothing to stop them. If you actually have a better product, barriers to entry in the software business are low.

The simple truth is that many Microsoft products have large market shares because consumers have chosen to buy them. This was even the case for Internet Explorer. It wasn't until version 4.0 that Explorer became a clearly better browser than Netscape Navigator and acquired significant market share.

We should all be thoroughly distrustful of the government and Microsoft's competitors when they tell us that we are forced to make the decisions we have been making. The surest way to lose my respect is to insult my intelligence.

Larry Seltzer
Maplewood, NJ

There are glaring factual omissions in the article regarding the Microsoft case. The authors failed to discuss Microsoft's pattern of using its operating system monopoly to steal markets from competitors in the applications software business. This distinction is crucial to understanding the case against Bill Gates & Co.

Once desktops included independent products like WordPerfect and Netscape. They are now replaced by Word and Internet Explorer. RealAudio is being consumed by MediaPlayer as you read these words, and Microsoft is fighting in the courts to replace Java with Csharp. Microsoft took none of the market risks to pioneer these products, yet they were able to clip the shoots when they were ripe by building their own versions into the operating system. A utility-minded customer is not going to repurchase that capability separately.

The diatribe about takeover of the Internet, the article's central point, is an unrealized fear. But what about these past crimes? Information technology is vitally important to a free society, and it would be a disservice to freedom to put a single corporation at the gate of society's information flow.

L.L. Williams
Manitou Springs, CO

David B. Kopel replies: L.L. Williams is incorrect. As I detail in my book *Antitrust After Microsoft*, Microsoft has never been able to use its operating system to defeat superior applications competitors.

The Windows Media Player has been bundled with Windows ever since the early 1990s. This bundling did not prevent the Real Networks media players from being preferred by most consumers during the long period (by computer industry time

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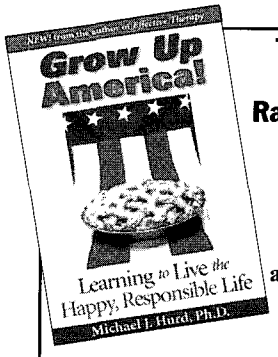

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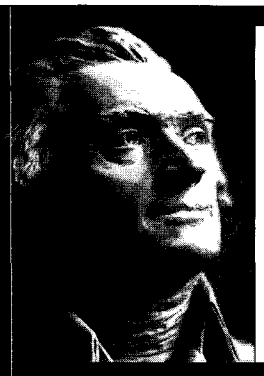

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standards) in which the Real products were clearly superior to WMP.

As Mr. Seltzer points out, Internet Explorer did not begin to seriously erode Netscape's market share until version 4.0, when most computer magazines rated it superior to Netscape. Explorer had been bundled with Windows since the day Windows 95 was released. But because early Explorer releases were inferior, Netscape was able to achieve a 90 percent market share for its $49 product, even though Microsoft was giving its browser away for free.

As for WordPerfect, this once-fine product was nearly destroyed by its incompetent acquirers, first Novell and then Corel. Windows 3.0 was introduced in 1989, but not until 1992 did WordPerfect produce a version for Windows. That version was unstable, prone to crashing, and bug-infested, as were subsequent releases.

Ground Zero

Anyone interested in American cities should read Sam Staley's nuanced account of Cincinnati's woes ("Ground Zero in Urban Decline," November). Staley looks at what other accounts have either ignored or misunderstood. Almost alone among those who have written about Cincinnati's troubles in the wake of last year's rioting, Staley recognizes the failure of large-scale rebuilding efforts in other cities.

His focus on the "Digital Rhine," the high-tech companies that have sprung up in the riot-torn neighborhood of Over-the-Rhine, is similarly a welcome relief. Most other accounts stress the local corporate giants like Procter & Gamble at the expense of grassroots economic activity. My one quibble: I wish he had talked more about whether there is a connection

between Cincinnati's dysfunctional politics and its economic woes.
Fred Siegel
The Cooper Union for Science and Art
New York, NY

Many decades ago, while working at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, a colleague, Don Phares, and I wrote a piece on housing in Cincinnati, to see what relevance it had to St. Louis. I also worked with the late Norton Long at the university, who predicted that the then-proposed light rail system for St. Louis would hemorrhage money. Indeed it does.

St. Louis is faring worse than Cincinnati, and is facing the issue in exactly the wrong way: by seeking to build a new, unneeded, publicly financed baseball stadium. Meanwhile, the city's infrastructure continues to decline, black and white folks are leaving in droves, and bureaucrats are as arbitrary as ever.

Staley lays out a coherent and useful case. Too bad the key people in these various cities are unlikely to read it. Norton Long screamed and hollered in the '70s and everyone heard him but ignored him. They'll probably ignore Staley, too.
Tom Vonder Haar
Washington, MO

Title IX Debate

I greatly enjoyed most of Cathy Young's article on Title IX ("Good Sports?," November). But one statement tainted the article: "...most of the blame rests with the reluctance of college administrators to touch the bloated budgets and inflated rosters of football programs."

"Bloated" budgets for football programs are only half of the story. These programs not only hold their own financially, but make money for the school. I am a student at Michigan State University, whose athletic program ranks second in the nation. We hold lotteries here just to determine who can camp out to buy cheering-section tickets. If prices truly scaled with demand, major sports programs might be even more profitable.

The idea of Title IX seems to be that a person should be able to participate freely in a sport regardless of other factors. But if that's your paradigm, then men suffer the most. Many women's sports simply aren't as popular and positions are available on most teams for almost anyone who wants to play. For major sports, like men's football, the average student can only dream of being on the team.

Finally, cheating and preferential treatment are major problems that need to be addressed directly. Title IX certainly won't solve that.
Joseph Blaim
East Lansing, MI

Freedom to Farm

Michael W. Lynch hardly gets started on the subject of government involvement in agriculture ("Money for Nothing," November). I do hope he is aware of the broader picture.

I have a small farm in western Oregon and work elsewhere full time. After 40 years, I have seen a lot. During that time, the government has always controlled agriculture to some degree, with the soil bank, set-asides, subsidies, incentives, land-use laws, quotas, etc. I was there when the government paid half our costs to drain wetlands to increase wheat production because Russia surprised them with a sudden, large wheat purchase, raising the price to $6 a bushel. The government put a stop to that, making the Russians space their purchases out and schedule them in advance. Wouldn't want the farmers to have a windfall year. Russia went elsewhere for wheat, looking for the best deal like anyone else.

I looked forward to the Freedom to Farm policy. I was tired of reporting to the government every acre I planted and where. I was tired of having to grow certain plants to maintain my allotment.

Land is zoned farm-use only. It can't be divided, built on, or used for anything else. One can get stuck going broke farming poor ground that can't be sold or used for anything else. Between wildlife overlays, scenic overlays, riparian overlays, permits, and the rest, there is no private property when it comes to agriculture.

Since the government controls the land and the prices to varying degrees, and won't allow the owner to make the best, most profitable use of his land, they can find themselves in a situation where they have to put the farmer on welfare to keep him alive.
James L. Werth
Grand Ronde, OR

Attention College Students

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Pagan nudists; defining terrorism down; deriding the rails; Cuba's embargoed truths; how the dismal science gots its name; and why high school sucks

Not in Kansas anymore

Naked Retreat

Michael W. Lynch

"THE PAGAN COMMUNITY is convinced it's about religion, the gay and lesbian community is sure it's about sexuality, and the naturists are certain it's about nudity," someone named Clarity wrote in a letter to users of Camp Gaea, a controversial Kansas resort. "What's a poor naked pantheist faerie to do?"

The "it" to which Clarity refers is Leavenworth County's refusal in November to renew a special-use permit for the resort, a 168-acre retreat in Tonganoxie, Kansas, that was once a church camp but now caters to pagans, gays, and nudists. Normally, the renewal of such a permit is a formality. But Camp Gaea's neighbors petitioned the county to shut it down, which meant a unanimous vote was required to renew. Two of the county's three commissioners voted against the camp.

"Traffic was the concern," says John Zoellner, planning director for Leavenworth County. "The types of individuals using the facility was a concern."

Neighbor Beth Hecht was certainly concerned about both. "As a mother of two young children, everyone wants to raise their kids in a healthy and safe community, and they definitely don't fit the idea of that kind of community," Hecht told the *Lawrence Journal-World*. Such events as the Heartland Spirit and Heartland Pagan festivals would cause several hundred cars to travel past Hecht's property. "When you have that volume of people coming around, it's just like having a stranger in your neighborhood," said Hecht. "It puts the community on edge not knowing who'd be coming in and out."

Actually, it was knowing too much about who was coming in and out that bothered Hecht and other neighbors. The camp plans to file for an injunction in federal court against the permit denial, claiming it constitutes viewpoint discrimination and thus is prohibited by the First Amendment. The camp is also considering challenging the denial as an unconstitutional regulatory taking.

"I think they were probably going to sue us, last I heard," says Zoellner. "They have a significant investment in that site."

Defining terrorism

Mission Creep

Sara Rimensnyder

AS THE U.S. government moves past the Afghan stage of the War on Terrorism, it will need to choose its battles cautiously. Various countries are likely to invoke the new global mandate against terror to justify egregious

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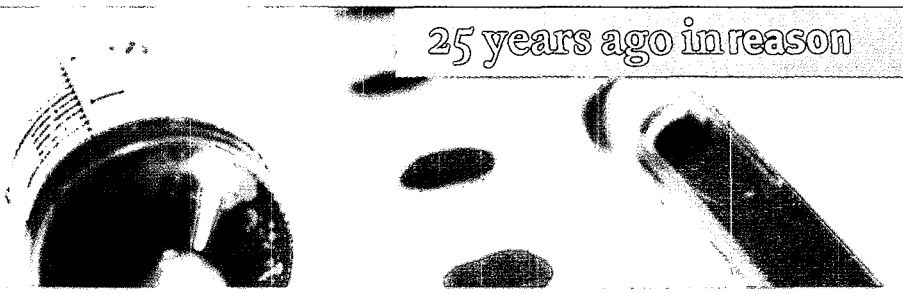


"One [Red Cross] official says, 'It's wrong to buy and sell blood like cabbages.' Maybe. Of course, there never seems to be any shortage of cabbages."

—Bill Birmingham, "Quickies"

"Most [of us] would applaud the recent court ruling... that cars near the Mexican border may not be stopped and searched by police just because they contain people with Spanish faces."

—John Hospers, "Getting From Here to There"

"The hippie has the right to take marijuana, walk naked on the beach, and have his own sex without anybody interfering, hasn't he? Isn't that just what libertarianism is all about?"

—Moshe Kroy, "Marketing Libertarianism"

"Block defends the right of deviant but nonaggressive individuals to engage in voluntary activities with no political restriction....When we see that his "heroes" also include counterfeiters, blackmailers, and male chauvinist pigs, however, we begin to suspect that something peculiar is going on."

—Sharon Presley, reviewing Walter Block's *Defending the Undefendable*

and unwarranted violations of human rights.

Underlining this point was Barbara Walters' November interview of Russian president and former KGB spook Vladimir Putin on ABC's *20/20*. One remark, regarding Putin's reaction to the September attack, made headlines: "We had talked about the possible threats to the United States, to other countries, but were not able to determine who, where, and how they could strike. And this was the first feeling I had, the feeling of anger and, to some extent, the feeling of guilt."

No headline mentioned that, in context, it was quite clear that Putin didn't feel guilty. He felt smug. His claim of remorse was actually an admonishment. This became clear when, right on cue, Walters noted that Putin had warned then-President Clinton about bin Laden but was ignored. "Even at that time we certainly were counting on more active cooperation in combating terrorism," Putin responded.

More specifically, Putin was counting on more active cooperation in combating the Chechens, terrorists or not. Muslim guerrillas trained in Afghanistan were apparently fighting alongside Chechen militants for independence from Russia. Putin wanted to share intelligence. Clinton declined, declaring the conflict an "internal Russian matter."

Putin also told Walters that while he felt "guilt...at the same time [he] understood quite well what the American people and the American leadership felt at that time," apparently comparing the World Trade Center attacks to two apartment building bombings in Moscow in 1999. The Russian government said the bombs, which killed hundreds, were the work of Chechen terrorists.

International cooperation in the War on Terrorism should stop well short of applauding or assisting Russia's actions in Chechnya, where the government has rarely distinguished between civilians and militants in a centuries-long fight to rule the territory by force.

Antony Nagelmann/Wirepix

Protecting civil liberties

PATRIOT Games

Brian Doherty

WE'VE ALL HEARD the alarming news for civil liberties contained in the massive USA PATRIOT Act rushed into law in November. (It's an acronym, believe it or not: Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism.)

Among those tools are the ability to conduct physical searches without property owners being present or alerted ("sneak-and-peak"), increased power for government officials to designate organizations as "terrorists" and to deport non-citizens who belong to them, and enhanced law-enforcement abilities to conduct phone and Internet taps with lower levels of judicial oversight.

But it wasn't all bad news. In the heady, frightened rush immediately after September 11, even worse ideas were floating around that thankfully didn't make it into law—or at least haven't yet.

Among them, says the Free Congress Foundation's J. Bradley Jansen, who helped organize a left-right coalition to defend civil liberties after 9/11, were the following: expansions of civil forfeiture that would have allowed the government to take property and money it could not directly link to any alleged crime; plans to share information gleaned from searches of U.S. citizens' e-mail by foreign intelligence services, even when the searches would have been illegal under U.S. law; and presidential authority to unilaterally extend foreign aid and credit anywhere as long as it was for "anti-terrorist activity."

Jansen notes that Sen. Judd Gregg (R-N.H.) "even wanted to bring back the Clipper Chip," an anti-encryption standard that would have let the feds read any e-mail and snoop on other scrambled communications. That idea too fell by the wayside.

Deriding the rails

Train Wreck

Jeff Taylor

IN NOVEMBER, THE Amtrak Reform Council concluded that the federal passenger rail service is "not capable of delivering the improvements...that are needed."

The 6-5 vote came just as many Amtrak routes were packed for the first time in years, as travelers shied away from the delays and perceived risks of air travel. The rail company has required $25 billion in subsidies during its 30 years of service.

Now the council has 90 days to come up with a plan for reorganization; meanwhile, Amtrak itself must develop a liquidation strategy. Congress will then review the two schemes and choose a course of action—which could be to do nothing at all. One possibility would be to shift responsibility for running the trains over to states or to private entities while the feds manage »

Quotes

"It's my understanding the [anti-terrorism] bill wasn't printed before the vote—at least I couldn't get it. They played all kinds of games, kept the House in session all night, and it was a very complicated bill. Maybe a handful of staffers actually read it, but the bill definitely was not available to members before the vote."

—Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas) in the November 9 issue of *Insight* magazine.

"Conscripts would have what all Americans now demand: choice."

—Charles Moskos and Paul Glastris in the November 4 *Washington Post*, laying out their plan for a new draft.

"All Taliban are moderate.... we are all moderates—taking the middle path."

—Taliban leader Mullah Omar Mohammad in a November 15 interview with the BBC's Pashto news service.

Source

Does rebel radio have a future in America? That's the question that **reason** Associate Editor Jesse Walker, author of the new *Rebels on the Air: An Alternative History of Radio in America*, addressed in a November talk at the Cato Institute. Visit cato.org/events/011101bf2.html for audio and video of the talk, which also features comments by former **reason** columnist Thomas W. Hazlett of the American Enterprise Institute.

Brickbats

To attract new recruits for the traffic police, British officials planned a TV commercial extolling their good works. To film the spot, they cordoned off part of a major highway at rush hour, backing up traffic for miles in several directions.

When Florida Highway Patrol officer A.J. Renard pulled over a Nissan Maxima for speeding, he felt that the driver, who was of Middle Eastern origin, behaved strangely. "Some people yell at us, and some don't say a word. But this man was laughing, and I felt it was suspicious," Renard said. When the man drove away, Renard started hyperventilating and became dizzy. He called for help and was taken to a local hospital, decontaminated and tested for various chemicals and germs. The diagnosis: The patrolman had had an anxiety attack.

Hoping to foil potential terrorism, officials in New York's Dutchess County have removed the names from several government buildings, most prominently the County Office Building in Poughkeepsie. Presumably, the extra security around the buildings, including barriers and restricted parking, will never clue anyone in to the structures' actual importance.

Germany is notorious for its censorship of violence in video games. Many violent games are heavily edited for the market. Others are banned entirely. But that still isn't enough for officials in Goettingen. They've slapped a 700 percent higher tax on violent arcade games than on ones they deem nonviolent.

About 20 percent of China's Internet users get their access through Internet cafés. But their ability to view uncensored news and entertainment is being seriously curtailed by a government crackdown on such spots. Some 40,000 police officers have swept across the nation, shutting down almost 2,000 cafés.

London's five "metric martyrs"—arrested for weighing their wares in pounds instead of kilos—are fighting in court to overturn their conviction. Not even the tyrannical Henry VIII tried to prohibit the sale of bananas by the pound, they argue.

For centuries, the children of farmers have pitched in with the family business. For one British union, that constitutes exploitation. "In no other industry do we allow children in the workplace," says Barry Leathwood, of the *Transport and General Workers' Union*. The union wants minors banned from farm work and placed in "child care facilities" instead.

The original opening sequence to *I Love Lucy* hasn't been seen in almost 50 years. And thanks to federal rules, it may never be seen again. For the 50th anniversary of the show's debut, the cable channel TV Land wanted to restore the original intro, showing an animated Desi and Lucy climbing ropes down the side of a pack of Phillip Morris cigarettes, the show's sponsor. But TV Land had to change its plans. "Philip Morris said 'because of FCC regulations and because of all the different rules...we cannot give you permission to use that in your opening,'" said a TV Land spokesman.

Charles Oliver

› infrastructure.

In the meantime, Bombardier Inc., the builder of Amtrak's high-speed Acela trains, has sued the railway for $200 million. Bombardier accuses Amtrak of failing to describe accurately the poor quality of its track and failing to complete a new electric traction system between New Haven and Boston on time. Because of these problems, says the company, the new "high-speed" trains are anything but. Indeed, the upgraded trains are forced to make turns at the same 35 mph clip of older trains.

Bombardier further claims that Amtrak took two years to decide on draperies for windows, 18 months to choose door chimes, and two years to determine where appliances would go in galley cars.

Drug war idiocy

Testing Frenzy

Sara Rimensnyder

THE TECUMSEH SCHOOL District of Oklahoma doesn't have a documented drug problem. Nevertheless, it has one of the strictest school drug-testing policies in the United States—so strict, in fact, that the Supreme Court will decide this spring whether it violates the Constitution.

The district requires that high school students undergo drug tests if they want to participate in any extracurricular activities, including such well-known dens of drug-related vice as the choir and the quiz team. Once students test clean, they also have to agree to random drug testing throughout the year.

Heading up the dissent are 16-year-old Lacey Earls and American Civil Liberties Union attorney Graham Boyd, who will argue the case in Washington. Says Boyd, "Drug testing represents the wholesale elimination of Fourth Amendment rights for all students that are subjected to it," adding that about 90 percent of students participate in after-school activities.

The Supreme Court has visited the topic of student drug testing before. In 1995, the justices ruled that an Oregon school, whose jocks were reportedly using drugs and running amok, could test student athletes. But Boyd is confident the court won't extend that ruling to students in other after-school activities. Athletes, he will argue, "uniquely waive their privacy expectations by agreeing to other invasions of privacy," such as shared dressing rooms and physical exams.

While the Supreme Court teases out the legal issues, the Tecumseh school board could use a good, strong hit of common

sense: Kicking a kid out of choir—or discouraging him from ever signing up—only gives him more time to experiment in illegal extracurricular activities.

Embargoed truths

Cuban Confusion

Sam MacDonald

HOW WELL HAS the decades-old U.S. embargo of Cuba worked? The official story is that the 39-year-old time-out imposed on our island neighbor to the south of Florida has successfully isolated Fidel Castro and friends from the rest of the world. Cuban officials are all too happy to agree: They need someone to blame for the foundering economic conditions that their people face.

A new study by the Cato Institute's Jonathan G. Clarke and the Hoover Institution's William Ratliff takes both sides to task. In "Report from Havana: Time for a Reality Check on U.S. Policy toward Cuba," Clarke and Ratliff detail their recent trips to Cuba and interviews with officials, dissidents, and regular citizens. The »

Balance Sheet

Jeff A. Taylor

Question Time

Two Oregon cities refuse federal requests that they question 5,000 foreigners about terrorism. Officials in Portland and Corvallis say they cannot simply question people without cause. They argue further that police would be distracted from real live crimes during the dragnet.

Global Bargaining

International trade talks in Doha, Qatar, revive hope for freer trade. The U.S. admits that its anti-dumping laws need fixing and agrees to discuss ending all farm subsidies everywhere, something developing countries desperately want.

Broadcast News

Veteran CBS newsman Bernard Goldberg writes that network news not only has a liberal slant, but revels in it. His book *Bias* also details the contempt elite broadcasters have for their audience, a.k.a. "white trash."

Replay Official

SonicBlue stares down threatened lawsuits from TV networks and releases ReplayTV, a digital video recorder mated to a broadband pipe. The device allows users to share recorded programs with up to 15 others. SonicBlue says it's fair use, defying content lawyers who argue that fair use is null in the digital age.

Mr. Marshals

Burned by worldwide ridicule, Montgomery County, Maryland, backs away from a plan to regulate smoking in private homes. The county had planned fines of up to $750 for people whose neighbors could smell cigarette smoke through the walls.

Ms. Fez

Lawmakers in Turkey update the nation's 76-year-old civil code to give women greater rights. Under the old code, husbands could legally forbid their wives from working outside the home.

Killer App

Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma blames the Internet when the headless corpse of a muckraking reporter turns up. "The Internet has become a killer. People can write whatever they like without signing their names," Kuchma says. Government officials consider licensing Web sites.

Maiming Justice

Despite official denials, talk of using truth serum on tight-lipped suspects swirls around the anti-terror probe. Proponents argue that injections are permissible if they prevent additional acts of terror.

Fast Capital

Washington, D.C., joins the list of cities using photo radar to catch speeders. The cameras are triggered when drivers go even 2 mph over the limit. Some consolation: Officers themselves have had to pay fines for tickets received while speeding to emergencies.

Raw Dealer

A Cobb County, Georgia, man is sued by a car dealer he complained about on a Web site. Jim Ellis Motors Inc. claims it was libeled when George Mantis posted that the dealer gave him the "worst service ever!" on his VW.

Name Game

As one of his last official acts, retiring Atlanta councilman Lee Morris tries to name streets for his kids. Morris introduced legislation changing the names of Dilbeck Place to Everett Lane and Junction Avenue to Jessie Junction. "The only thing they ever asked from me was this," Morris said.

Crabby Cakes

University of Maryland administrators force a student Web site, TerpIdiots.com, to change names. "Terp" is a university trademark. TerpIdiots was popular as a campus-wide discussion site with topics from fraternity reform to dating tips to academic ethics.

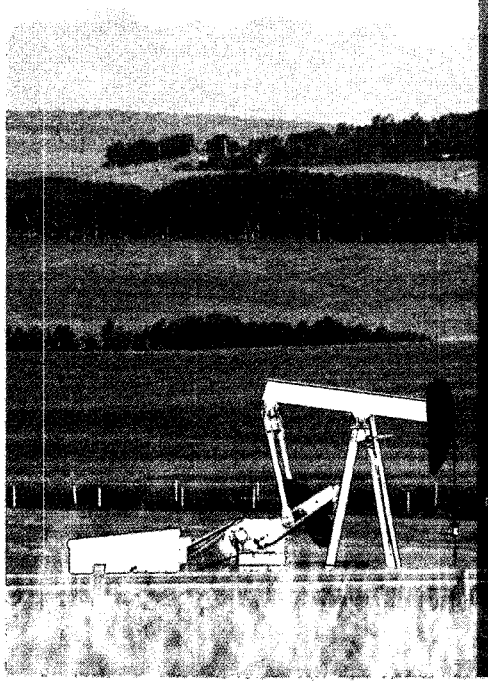
Data

Oil Change

Michael W. Lynch

As the media exposed our Saudi Arabian allies as double-dealing despots, attention has turned to the practical: Can the United States live without Saudi oil, which, at 1.6 million barrels a day, accounts for 14 percent of our imports? The answers are mixed. *The Wall Street Journal*'s Susan Lee says we can, since other countries will simply sell more oil. *Newsweek* reached a similar conclusion. On the other hand, writing in *The Weekly Standard*, Hudson Institute economist Irwin Stelzer says "not a chance"—at least not for many years.

The most useless contribution came from *The New York Times*' Paul Krugman, who said that "intelligent policies could break" the oil price surge-and-bust cycle. His only concrete suggestion: increase mileage standards on SUVs to those of cars. Unfortunately for Krugman, Stelzer disposed of this hoary idea, pointing out that even a 25 percent increase in mileage standards would take a decade to decrease oil consumption by barely more than 1 million barrels a day. That's less than we buy from the Saudis today.



U.S. Oil Supply 2000

Source	Millions of Barrels Per Day	
Domestic Production	9.39	45.8%
Canada	1.69	8.2%
Mexico	1.36	6.6%
South & Central America	2.58	12.6%
Western Europe	0.89	4.3%
Former Soviet Union	0.07	0.3%
Middle East	2.50	12.2%
North Africa	0.23	1.1%
West Africa	1.40	6.8%
Australasia	0.05	0.2%
China	0.04	0.2%
Japan	0.01	0.1%
Other Asia Pacific	0.18	0.9%
Unidentified	0.11	0.5%
TOTAL	20.50	100.0%*

*numbers do not add up to 100 due to rounding
Source: Energy Information Administration and BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2001

› authors argue that despite almost four decades of American opprobrium, Cuba has managed to make solid economic ties with close U.S. allies such as Canada and the United Kingdom.

They also show how Castro has failed to harness those lucrative connections by squandering resources on bankrupt socialist schemes. For instance, the report notes that while housing is "virtually free," it is also in extremely short supply, with extended families often packed into cramped quarters. Wages are also a problem, with the average state employee bringing in about $12 a month. According to Clarke and Ratliff, "an attractive lady can earn more in two nights than a state-paid neurosurgeon does in a month."

The report recommends engagement through free trade and allowing private citizens to travel freely between the two countries. (The latter is already happening despite continued restrictions, according to the report. Americans who can't get into Cuba legally through cultural, journalistic, or educational exceptions can easily slip in through a third country.) It also suggests dropping U.S. government support of anti-regime activities within Cuba, especially a proposed Senate bill that would deliver $100 million to Cuban political and human rights activists. Castro's policies are bad enough to fail on their own, say the authors. Removing punitive American policies would rob him of the one thing he needs most—a scapegoat.

The abortion pill

Weak Choice

Sara Rimensnyder

ONE YEAR AFTER the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the abortion pill Mifeprix, better known as RU-486, the Kaiser Family Foundation has released numbers regarding its actual availability to American women.

In a national survey sample, only 6 percent of gynecologists and a mere 1 percent of general practice physicians offer Mifeprix abortions. The largest group of those doctors—roughly 40 percent—say it's because they don't approve of abortion. Others cite lack of demand, fear of violent reprisal, political controversy, logistical problems, and a lack of interest in providing abortions of any kind.

While that's no crisis for reproductive rights, it does mean that abortion clinics currently remain the primary locale for the procedure—and high-profile targets for pro-life activists. (Fifty percent of clinics are now offering the pill, a number likely to increase rapidly.) Mifeprix, when used in conjunction with a contraction-inducing drug, has proven 96 to 98 percent effective in various trials.

Advocates had hoped that the pill, which can terminate a pregnancy up to seven weeks in, would defuse the abortion wars by making the procedure more private, available to a woman at her regular doctor's office. Though availability will likely increase, the chances of that outcome were all but eliminated early on, when the FDA placed stringent rules on how the drug would be prescribed and administered.

NASA watch

Space Pork

Jeremy Lott

FACED WITH A coming budget crunch, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is toying

with a controversial solution: Sell off the space shuttles.

An October BBC report explains why the Bush administration is leaning toward this proposal. In keeping with recent elephantine overruns that render the Space Station Alpha a useless floating boondoggle in the sky, each NASA shuttle launch costs over $400 million. The fleet would be purchased by companies that would, in turn, be paid to launch the rockets at much lower costs.

Not everyone is happy. Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), whose Web site proudly describes him as hailing from the Sunshine State's "Space Coast," has criticized the privatization plan on the grounds that it might hurt the national interest in a time of war. But even those without aerospace constituents doubt that the savings will be nearly as grand as projected.

Glenn Reynolds, former CEO and policy chair of the National Space Society, applauds the plan to get NASA out of the business of "running a space trucking company." But he says the real problem is the space shuttle itself.

According to Reynolds, the design shorted upfront costs "at the expense of much higher operational costs and somewhat lower reliability." He also charges that it was made much larger than necessary in order to secure military support.

Rather than building the next wave of shuttles, says Reynolds, "The government should purchase launch services—not vehicles—from private industry." ◧

Dismal Humanists

Nick Gillespie

David M. Levy

The eminent Victorian Thomas Carlyle famously castigated economics as "the dismal science." The epithet first appeared in his 1849 screed, "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question"—in which the "humanist" attacked free-market economists for their role in the anti-slavery movement. For Carlyle and "progressives" such as John Ruskin and Charles Dickens, economics was dismal because it sought to replace hierarchy with democracy.

In *How the Dismal Science Got Its Name: Classical Economics and the Ur-Text of Racial Politics*, David M. Levy revisits the debate between the pro-slavery Victorians and classical liberal abolitionists such as John Stuart Mill. He discusses the notorious case of Jamaica's Gov. John Eyre, who in the 1860s oversaw the beating deaths of hundreds of blacks. The controversy split British intelligentsia, with Carlyle, Ruskin, and Dickens defending Eyre in starkly racist and anti-market terms, while Mill, T.B. Macaulay, and John Bright pushed for prosecution. Levy, an associate professor of economics at George Mason University, spoke with reason Editor-in-Chief Nick Gillespie.

Q: Explain the significance of your "Ur-text."

A: In his "Occasional Discourse," Carlyle goes after market economists for joining forces with religious types in the anti-slavery movement. Carlyle defended slavery on the grounds that blacks weren't fully human and that slavery could make them more so. If you weren't really a person, he argued, you could be exterminated. Fifteen years later, in the Eyre controversy, blacks were beaten to death with wire whips—and Eyre was defended by many of the leading lights of Victorian society, who also hated markets.

Q: What were the connections between the contempt for markets and defense of slavery?

A: Markets bust hierarchy. Carlyle also coined the term "consumer sovereignty" in 1833. It was a sneering reference to political economist Richard Whately's exchange theory of government, in which policy is viewed as a trade between something like equals. Carlyle's view of the world was that it should be ruled by hierarchy and the worship of heroes. Obedience to the demands of your superiors was everything. The exchange inherent in markets—rather than the command of hierarchy—was anarchy.

Q: Your next project deals with paternalism.

A: My next book, which I'm writing with Sandra J. Peart, explains the link between paternalism and bias against markets. Economists characteristically think people can take care of themselves. But paternalism is very attractive—it's all about warmhearted compassion, right? We're linking paternalism to fears of parasitism: Why is it that wherever you find the belief in a persistent class that paternalists see as victimizers, you find talk about parasites and extermination?

Why high school sucks

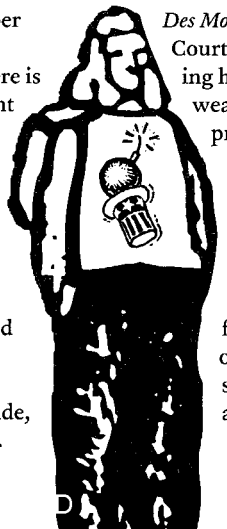
Club Anarchy

Jesse Walker

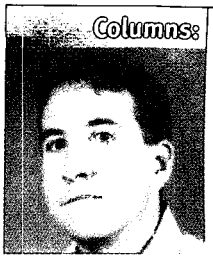
THEY DON'T CARE much for anarchy at Sissonville High. Late in 2001, the West Virginia school barred 15-year-old Katie Sierra from starting an Anarchy Club, then suspended her for three days when she leafleted students to join the club anyway. It also scolded her for wearing a T-shirt bearing this handwritten comment: "When I saw the dead and dying Afghani children on TV, I felt a newly recovered sense of national security. God Bless America." In November, the Kanawha County Circuit Court upheld the school's right to do all of the above.

The local *Charleston Daily Mail* praised the decision, arguing that "Americans cherish the freedoms guaranteed them under the Constitution, but the thoroughly egocentric exercise of those rights becomes tiresome." For those worried that tiresomeness might not be a legal doctrine, the paper added that while free speech is "sacred," there is no "constitutional right to force everybody else in society to listen during school hours."

Sierra tried to appeal the decision, but the West Virginia Supreme Court refused the case. That's odd, because settled law appears to be on her side, to judge from *Tinker v. Des Moines*, the U.S. Supreme Court's 1969 decision allowing high school students to wear black armbands to protest the Vietnam War.



Katie doesn't plan to give up on anarchy anytime soon, but she won't be doing it at school. In November, tired of harassment by fellow students, the girl opted to telecommute to school, avoiding bullies and fashion police altogether. ◧



Misunderestimating the Public

Press gatekeepers may fret about information, but the average Joe is swimming in it.

IF YOU'VE SPENT any time perusing the news lately, you might get the impression that the American media are now All War, All the Time. Don't be fooled. Here inside the Beltway, the media continue to scrutinize every possible facet of a topic that even terrorism cannot shake from their minds: the media. Journalists are complaining that outside forces, be they corporate cutbacks or stingy press secretaries, are keeping them from doing their jobs. But if that's so, why is it easier than ever to get information?

Media navel-gazing is hardly new. With so many journalists scurrying about the nation's capital, they naturally get together on occasion to consider how important they are. Before September 11, the typical "media forum" went something like this: A few top-level media types would dream up a topic, set out scones and coffee, network for a few minutes, then launch into an hour of introspection about "the role of the media" in this new era of—take your pick—technology/multiculturalism/globalism/corporate conglomeration/etc. The scones and coffee are still around, but the tone and frequency of these self-examinations have changed dramatically since the terror attacks.

American University convened a typical pre-terror media forum on September 4: "Bush II and the Media: 'Misunderestimating' Each Other?" The title was an irreverent evocation of one of the president's better-known manglings. Panel members included Richard Berke, national political correspondent for *The New York Times*, David Gregory, White House correspondent for NBC News, and Judy Woodruff, senior correspondent and anchor of CNN's *Inside Politics*. In the course of the discussion, panelists traded groans over the 2000 election crisis, the new administration's reluctance to share information with reporters, and the public's nagging affection for unseemly stories in the emerging Monica/Chandra tradition.

Fast forward to a November 12 event at the National Press Club. "American Newspapers: Headlines, Bottom Lines and Covering the War" was that night's installment of the Kalb Report Series, a string of forums named for Marvin Kalb. Talk about gravitas: Kalb has over 30 years in the business, serving as a chief diplomatic correspondent for CBS and NBC, and as moderator of *Meet the Press*. Now he runs the Washington office of Harvard's Joan Shorenstein Center on Press, Politics, and Public Policy. Joining Kalb on the panel were such equally serious journalists as Tom Curley, president and publisher of *USA Today*, Robert Rosenthal, former editor of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, two journalism professors, and a media analyst. There was no misunderestimating this crew.

Rosenthal's presence was especially telling. He became something of a martyr for serious journalists when he quit his high-profile Philadelphia job in early November over a dispute with owner Knight-Ridder. Corporate was concerned about dwindling ad revenue and readership, so they told Rosenthal to cut back on staff. He quit instead. Disputes over the "corporate" drive for profit have long been a thorn in the Fourth Estate's side. The new age of terror has added a bit of urgency to the ranting, however.

Why? It all has to do with "seriousness." Journalists aren't covering O.J. and Monica anymore: There's a war on. Even Geraldo has traded in his pundit credentials for a shot at the front lines. The panelists carped about media outlets that were supposedly caught "asleep at the wheel," having recently cut back on expensive foreign bureaus. Kalb and company readily admitted

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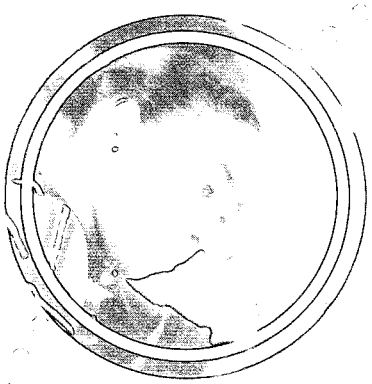

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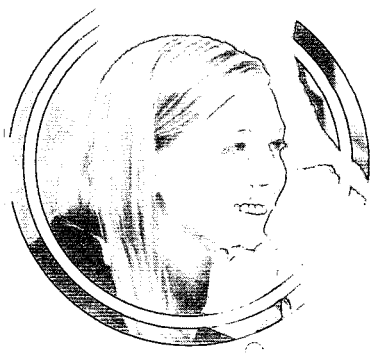

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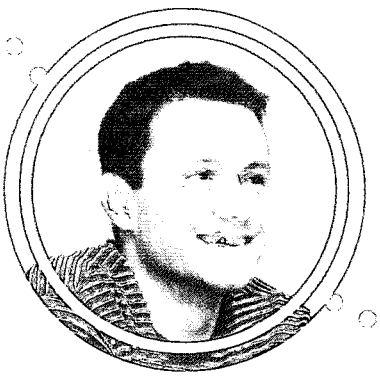

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that the press responded rapidly by pumping vast sums of money and personnel into covering the war. They also said that so far, the coverage has been good. What they wondered was whether the profit-minded bosses would continue to foot the bill. Rosenthal's experience served as a cautionary tale. When Kalb asked his old pal "Rosie" if the influx of funding would continue, he replied that it was "too soon to tell."

I poured some gas on the fire during the Q&A period when I mentioned the palpable change in tone at these forums since September 11. I asked if the panelists thought the focus would eventually shift back to snarky examinations of Bush's creative magniloquence. Tom Wolzien, a senior media analyst for Sanford C. Bernstein & Co., LLC, looked me squarely in the eye, intoned the memory of the thousands of Americans killed in the attacks, and said, "Let's never forget it." Kalb agreed, arguing that in this new age of terrorism, "there is no place" for newsroom hacks who refer to the commander-in-chief as "W."

These weighty discussions have not been limited to the National Press Club. In a move that fuses the nation's top academic institution with its most highly regarded think tank, Harvard's Shorenstein Center and the Brookings Institution have launched a weekly series in the wake of September 11: "The Role of the Press in the Anti-Terror Campaign." "We don't usually carry these things through week after week," Brookings Senior Fellow Stephen Hess said while introducing the series on October 31, noting the special attention currently being lavished on such matters.

The first forum, called "Lessons of Wars Past," featured megastars Ted Koppel, Peter Arnett, and Daniel Schorr. (Schorr got his start as a foreign correspondent in 1946; he's now at National Public Radio and still working.) It was full of musings about the proper way to cover a war and the government's stubborn refusal to hand out information.

Schorr reminisced that in World War II—unlike today—front-line correspondents wore standard military uniforms. "They were a part of something called the war effort," he said. "They would go and ask, 'Would it be harmful if I reported this?'...That got lost somewhere." Schorr argued that such close cooperation between the military and the press began to deteriorate in Korea and Vietnam as the government tried to more closely "manage" what journalists reported. He said that press relations with the military have "been going very rapidly downhill" ever since.

For his part, Koppel railed at the current administration's attempts to strong-arm broadcasters into keeping Osama bin Laden's video releases off the air, because they might contain secret messages. "I thought at the time, what a totally stupid argument," he said, noting quite sensibly that people who really wanted to see it could find the footage online.

The best exchange of the series probably came at the November 8 forum, when someone asked Army Col. Bill Darley if the military would ever allow reporters to "embed" with Army Rangers on special operations missions. "The short answer, under current circumstances, no," Darley said. After discussing it momentarily, his long answer turned out to be even more emphatic: "At the present time, embedding is out of the question. That's the bottom line."

In some ways, discussions like these are essential. The media must provide people with the information they need to assess the war effort, its aims, and its progress. In other ways, however, the debate is pointless.

While it is appropriate to praise the courage and determination of a front-line press corps operating under very tough conditions, it is far too early to offer more than cursory judgment of the coverage. Weekly panels notwithstanding, this really is first-draft history, and we may have reason tomorrow to revise our view of the stories that we are reading and watching today. We simply have no idea of the full context of the war, much less the stories that reporters may be missing or possibly misunderstanding.

Anyway, the real media story isn't potential cutbacks in coverage; it's the vastly greater opportunities to follow this war than have ever existed. Americans can turn to traditional local and national coverage, both in print and online. But they can also call up digital coverage by a staggering number of sources near and far, including accounts by the British press, the Pakistani press, and even Al Jazeera.

A major complaint at media forums both before and after the attacks has been that the public "forced" journalists to cover such unseemly issues as the Condit affair. CNN's Aaron Brown recently had something useful to say about that. Shortly after the attacks, Brown reported an update in O.J. Simpson's road rage trial. He paused after the report, then looked into the camera. "Oh, for the days," he said, when O.J.'s problems seemed important. ◻

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Excluded Evidence

The dark side of rape shield laws

MANY CONTINUING THREATS to civil liberties in America are completely unrelated to terrorism or to national security. Furthermore, many civil libertarians are silent about these abuses, because they are motivated by "progressive" goals—such as ostensibly protecting women from abuse.

Consider the widening reach and the unintended consequences of rape shield laws. These statutes, hailed as a way to keep victims from being smeared as sluts in court, have sometimes kept juries from hearing evidence highly relevant to the guilt or innocence of the accused.

On November 1, a court in Manhattan dismissed all charges against Oliver Jovanovic, a student at Columbia University. Jovanovic was at the center of a notorious "cybersex" case involving an Internet acquaintance, a real-life date, and accusations of kidnapping, sexual assault, and sexual torture.

In 1998, Jovanovic was convicted of attacking Barnard College student Jamie Rzucek (whose name has been disclosed by some media outlets after the case was dismissed) and was sentenced to a minimum of 15 years in prison. Rzucek claimed that Jovanovic held her captive in his apartment for 20 hours and subjected her to torture and sexual abuse. The defense argued that there was no torture—Rzucek's claim that Jovanovic forcibly sodomized her was disputed by medical evidence, and the jury returned a not-guilty verdict on the counts pertaining to this act—and that the bondage was consensual.

This argument was crippled by Judge William Wetzel's decision to exclude portions of the e-mail correspondence between Jovanovic and Rzucek in which she discussed her adventures in sadomasochism, including her sadomasochistic relationship with another man. The messages, the judge held, were inadmissible under New York State's rape shield law because they had to do with the accuser's sexual conduct.

In late 1999, the Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court, by a 3-to-1 vote, set aside the conviction on the grounds that Judge Wetzel had applied the rape shield law improperly and left the jury with a "distorted view of the evidence." The case was sent down for retrial, but Rzucek proved reluctant to testify a second time, and prosecutors eventually sought a dismissal "in the interests of justice." Jovanovic's vindication came at a high price: as much as $500,000 in legal fees, not to mention 20 months spent in state penitentiaries.

Rape shield laws, which mostly date from the 1970s and are virtually universal today, enjoy broad public support. In surveys, about three-quarters of Americans agree that a woman's past sexual life should not be an issue in a rape case. Indeed, it seems obvious that to quiz a woman who says she was raped about whether she has had two, 10, or 20 sexual partners is not only cruel and degrading but irrelevant to the question of whether she consented to sex with the man in the dock. But in quite a few cases, rape shield laws have been applied to evidence that has a direct bearing on the credibility of the accuser (and, sometimes, only the most tenuous connection to her sexual past).

Prior to the Jovanovic trial, the most notorious case to raise these issues was that of sportscaster Marv Albert, who was accused by his longtime friend and sex partner Vanessa Perhach of oral sodomy and assault. At the 1997 trial, notable for tawdry details of transvestitism and kinky sex, Albert's attorneys wanted to bring up Perhach's alleged conduct with other men, particularly men who left her—as Albert, who

was getting married, was about to do. She had reportedly harassed and threatened a former boyfriend's family, and may have made false accusations of crimes as a form of revenge. A former lover was also willing to testify that biting, on which the assault charge against Albert was based, was a part of her sexual repertoire.

All this testimony was barred by Circuit Court Judge Benjamin Kendrick. (Meanwhile, a woman who came forward with a claim that Albert had sexually assaulted her several years earlier was allowed to take the stand.) With the defense's hands tied, Albert pleaded guilty to misdemeanor assault. The outcome struck many observers—even those, such as Geraldo Rivera, who are generally sympathetic to victims' rights—as shockingly unfair.

And then there are the more obscure cases:

• In Wisconsin in 1993, 18-year-old Charles Steadman was convicted of raping his 22-year-old foster sister Jessica in a he said/she said case in which physical evidence of force was absent and the defendant claimed that the sex was consensual. What the jury didn't know was that when Jessica filed the complaint, she herself was facing criminal charges of having sex with minors. (She eventually received probation with mandatory psychiatric treatment.) Clearly, this gave her a reason to lie—particularly since she had had sexual relations with Steadman when he was underage. She might have thought that being a victim would improve her legal situation as a defendant, or she might have worried that if her encounter with Steadman became known, she would get in more trouble with the law. None of these possible motives could be introduced at Steadman's trial, since Jessica's legal problems were related to her past sexual activities and hence inadmissible.

• In Oregon in 1989, James Anderson was convicted of raping "Donna R." while both were patients at a substance-abuse clinic. Anderson insisted that the sex was consensual and that Donna made up the charges in order to sue the clinic, which threw her out the morning after the alleged rape because she wouldn't sign up for long-term treatment. After initially claiming that she had tried to tell clinic staffers about the attack but was rebuffed, Donna reversed herself under cross-examination and said that she had not spoken about it to any of them because she was too embarrassed. In his summation, the prosecutor sneered that the defense expected a rape victim to "just walk up to one of the staff" and discuss "those most intimate details."

The jurors were never told that the day before, she had discussed equally "intimate details"—an alleged earlier rape and childhood sexual abuse—with one of the counselors. All records of this conversation were excluded from the trial under the rape shield law as pertaining to the accuser's sexual history; so was the fact that Donna had given several inconsistent accounts of her prior sexual victimization. Whether or not Donna was raped, the case seemed to leave ample room for reasonable doubt—particularly if one knew that Donna was not a reliable witness.

When rape shield laws were first enacted as part of the rape law reforms initiated by the feminist movement, they were a response to truly abusive practices. Just 30 years ago, jurors in rape cases were often formally instructed to consider evidence of "unchaste character" (such as going to bars alone, extramarital liaisons, and use of birth control) as detracting from the complainant's credibility or indicating that she was more likely to have consented to sex.

But in recent years, even some feminist legal theorists, such as Vivian Berger, have expressed concern that the pendulum may have swung too far. Granted, the accuser's past sexual conduct is not automatically excluded—just as, before shield laws, it wasn't automatically allowed. Her prior relations with the accused are generally admissible; so is evidence that the pregnancy or disease alleged to have resulted from the rape may have been caused by sex with someone else. In some states, other evidence may be admitted at the judge's discretion.

Most of the time, however, the burden is on the defendant to show that the value of this evidence to his case outweighs its "prejudicial effect" on the complainant. In several states (including Alabama, Iowa, and Washington), courts have held that excluding evidence of an earlier false or dubious rape complaint by the accuser does not deny the accused a fair trial—even, perhaps, if the evidence is relevant to the question of his innocence.

In some cases, such as *People v. Jovanovic*, appellate courts have curbed the worst abuses of rape shield laws. But this is an issue that is overdue for a new look by legislatures, even if reforms are likely to engender a furious reaction from feminist groups.

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Service Economy

First-draft suggestions for a real draft proposal

"FOR THE FIRST time in our history we are entering a war of significant size...without drafting young men to fight the threat," Charles Moskos and Paul Glastris wrote recently in *The Washington Monthly*. For Moskos, a Northwestern University professor and author of the armed services' wildly successful "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, this is an intolerable irony. The article's toldja-so title—"Now Do You Believe We Need A Draft?" is the giveaway: After years of arguing for forceful social cohesion, Moskos joins the long list of pundits whose pet projects (in his case, Tojo-era mass conscription) have been magically justified by September 11.

Sadly, there's even less to the justification than meets the eye. The armed forces show a distinct lack of interest in a new draft (an inconvenience Moskos chalks up to institutional rigidity), and arguably have reached a state of professional specialization that renders conscripted legions unnecessary or problematic. It's hard to argue that forcing the services to feed, clothe, house, and equip massive new numbers of post-pubescents would have had anything but a deleterious impact on our ability to wage war in Afghanistan.

Thus, Moskos is pushing a free-ranging national service. In the spirit of team-spirit busybody and *Bowling Alone* author Robert Putnam, Moskos conceives an era of impressment for both civilian and military duties. If conscripts don't want to serve in the military, they can paricipate in civilian projects to be named later.

While Congress remains indifferent to the idea, a rogue's gallery of retired colonels and politicians has answered Moskos' call; and as the push for a draft gathers steam, we see looming administrative headaches. Sure, the information society can never have enough riveters and air raid wardens, but how many kids can America really keep busy with homeland defense or highway median beautification?

Ordinarily we'd reject the draft on general principles. But these are extraordinary times. It's time to pitch in with some suggestions for how America's new generation of draftees can fill what will no doubt be their many idle hours:

• Man the Butterball Hotline over holidays.

• Provide discount dog-walking to the Dept. of Homeland Defense.

• Assist Lynne Cheney's Council of Trustees and Alumni in interviewing 5,000 agronomy professors suspected of holding unpatriotic opinions.

• Ride Amtrak.

• Guard against terrorist attempts to introduce bio-chemical agents into the water at Sea World.

• Distribute copies of *Bowling Alone* to the homeless.

• Fill congressional representatives' seats during C-SPAN broadcasts.

• Send daily letters to the editor that begin, "Wake up, America!"

• Inspect Mr. Softee trucks for cross-pollination of rainbow and chocolate jimmies.

• Visit Ground Zero, site of the worst terrorist attack in history.

• Visit Ground Zero, soon-to-open chain of theme restaurants owned by Sly, Bruce, and Arnold.

• Monitor Internet postings for misuse of the who/whom distinction.

• Become slaves for the elderly.

• Ghostwrite three-dot "Nobody asked me, but..." columns for free *Weekly Shopper* circulars around the nation.

• Provide "local color" for visitors to New York City by dressing as Hasidim, construction workers, and Hare Krishnas.

• Revive America's fading poetry fad with a grassroots poetry slam campaign under the direction of U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins.

• Become USO magicians.

• Assist producers of the various yellow pages in coordinating production and door-to-door delivery.

• Form a cordon around George Lucas' Skywalker Ranch to assure that nobody gets in—or out.

• Assist local law enforcement "Toys for Boxcutters" exchange programs.

• Explain values of coerced patriotism and collective purpose to other draftees.

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The Media and GI Joe

How the press gets the military wrong—and why it matters

Chris Bray

Back in October, when U.S. Army Rangers first started to fight on the ground in Afghanistan, *Washington Post* reporter Greg Schneider drew the job of explaining the role of those elite infantrymen to the paper's readers. Drawing on Army manuals, he set out to explain just what it is that sets Ranger battalions apart from their infantry cousins. "Rangers are more heavily armed than most light infantry units," he wrote on October 20. "Their automatic weapons units carry M240G machine guns that can fire up to 1,000 rounds a minute at a range of 1,000 yards. Some Rangers also

Finally, the Rangers "travel light, usually in rifle companies of about 200 men each." With this kind of information, it's hard not to be impressed: soldiers who train with *actual bullets*! And travel light, albeit in groups of 200.

There's a very particular form of deafness at work here. U.S. infantry units of every type tend to be grouped in rifle companies of 200, for example—and armed in part with machine guns and grenade launchers, and likely to train at night and in bad weather. Imagine one of the *Post*'s science writers telling you that human beings are unique [illegible] because they [illegible]

U.S. ARMY

that they are more heavily armed than other infantrymen, but rather that they are often less heavily armed; they are a raiding force, organized not for firepower but for speed and agility.

Schneider's piece is symptomatic of news media that often don't have the foggiest idea how the military works, and don't really appear to care. Some have argued that this is the result of a general decline in military service: Fewer reporters are exposed to the learning experience of armed forces training, because fewer people in the entire population are exposed to it. And so the whole topic has sunk into the haze of cultural disconnection.

"To many young reporters these days," said longtime journalist James Perry in a 1997 lecture at Washington College, "wars and soldiers and serving your country are vague concepts. I always like to tell the story of a colleague at the *Wall Street Journal* who asked me one day not long ago if Marines had served in World War II. Indeed they had, I responded, and in the Revolutionary War, too. He went on to cover the Pentagon."

Not all the implications of that disconnect are immediately apparent. The real problem is that there are further disconnects right inside the institutions the news media are struggling to explain. There are, in the U.S. military, discrete cultures—camps and rifts and doctrinal trails that lead off into different wildernesses altogether. Figuring out what this thing really is, and what it can really do, is a job for a team of spelunkers. It's serious work, but the nation's major newspapers are assigning reporters to the job who are awed that Rangers are organized in rifle companies.

Reporters who cover the military without understanding it don't just muff a few basic facts about what kind of soldier carries what kind of gun, or which service does what. They also fail to apply the right skepticism in the right places, or even the right credulity in the right places, and so end up swinging in a wild arc between breathless adulation and naive condemnation. They surrender many of the necessary tools for questioning the authority of the armed forces, and render nearly useless the check and the balance of the Fourth Estate on a major power of government. They create confidence where there should be wariness, and fear where there should be strength.

They get it wrong, and it counts.

Lt. Col. Mike Meese and Col. Russ Howard both work at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Howard is a special forces officer and the head of the academy's department of social sciences; Meese is his deputy in the department and a field artillery officer. Calling them from my home in Los Angeles, I get a glimpse into an internal conversation that has been underway in the military for the better part of a decade. It's a conversation that you haven't read very much about.

"We've been revising and updating the curriculum throughout the '90s, mostly to deal with the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War," Meese says.

But what they've been talking about, in the absence of a Soviet Union, is a pair of ideas derived from Soviet doctrine.

One is the notion of the "revolution in military affairs," a recurring event in history that changes the face of war and alters the balance of power. Soviet military analysts started using the term in the 1970s, in a slightly different package—they called it the M.T.R., the "military/technological revolution." When U.S. analysts picked up the term, they added a doctrinal component, and a new military acronym was born:

Reporters who cover the military without understanding it don't just muff basic facts. They end up swinging in a wild arc between breathless adulation and naive condemnation.

the RMA. Not that the thing itself was new. The introduction of the longbow to the battlefield was a revolution in military affairs; so was the introduction of the machine gun.

We're supposed to be in the middle of a Revolution in Military Affairs today. Military leaders have discussed it so much that they rarely use the full term anymore, and just abbreviate on first reference. Today's RMA is a mostly notional revolution in the use of information and automation on the battlefield—a use of smart machines that allow networked, integrated forces to become more lethal at the same time they become more agile. We have, to sum it up, an exceptionally long way to go before the current RMA is played out; Meese stresses that the term refers to radical change, but not necessarily to rapid change.

The second, more interesting, idea pulled from the Soviets is that of asymmetric warfare. It's a term that has appeared in the news more often than RMA, but it's not always clear what it means or where it came from. It didn't make its first appearance in U.S. military doctrine until several years after the Soviet Union had vanished. The first use of the term here, in a 1995 report titled *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States*, referred roughly to fighting between forces that were not matched in size and composition; a 1998 report defined it with elegant simplicity as "not fighting fair." Meese defines it in useful terms, calling it a way for a weak enemy to dominate a strong one; once you go down this road, notions of strength and weakness become a little more fluid.

The trend has been for asymmetric warfare to leak off the battlefield. We recently saw one of the historical apogees of asymmetric warfare in New York and Washington. The likelihood of such attacks was often hinted at within military circles over the last few years. In 1999, yet another U.S. report, a Joint Staff strategic review titled *Asymmetric Approaches to Warfare*—let the record show that military organizations are exceptionally good at producing a lot of reports—concluded that asymmetric approaches "are attempts to circumvent or undermine U.S. strengths while exploiting U.S. weaknesses using methods that differ significantly from the United States' expected method of operations." And we certainly have seen something that differed significantly from the methods we expected.

One of the clearest definitions of the potential boundaries of this notion borrowed from the Soviet military comes from—nice touch—the Chinese military. In 1999, two senior colonels in the People's Liberation Army wrote a book, *Unrestricted Warfare*, that examined the military potential of things like hacker attacks on U.S. economic infrastructure. But Cols. Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui were talking about something else, too: "'Unrestricted Warfare' means that any methods can be prepared for use, information is everywhere, the battlefield is everywhere, and that any technology might be combined with any other technology, and that the boundaries between war and non-war and between military and non-military affairs has systematically broken down....This new way of thinking puts weapons into the daily lives of civilians. New concept weapons can make of war something that even military professionals will find hard to imagine. Both soldiers and civilians will be disturbed to see items in their everyday lives become weapons that can attack and kill."

Ring any bells? It's important not to make too much of *Unrestricted Warfare*, a book that mostly centers on technological sabotage. The authors have also explicitly and repeatedly said that they were examining possibilities, not calling for action—and they aren't central figures in the Chinese military.

"It was written by a couple of colonels," Meese says. "I'm a colonel, and no one listens to me."

The point is that the ideas were out there. Stephen Sloan, a professor of political science at the University of Oklahoma, got even closer to the thing with a July 1998 paper written for the Strategic Studies Institute at the U.S. Army War College.

"As a result of the introduction of commercial jet aircraft, we have witnessed the emergence of 'Non-Territorial Terrorism'—a form of terror that is not confined to a clearly delineated geographical area. In a very real sense, terrorists now have the capacity to engage in what could be called low-intensity aerospace warfare. They have at their disposal what are for all practical purposes human intercontinental delivery systems composed of skyjackers, and terrorists who are carrying out operations thousands of miles from their base of operations."

And so it's interesting to note the trend of coverage emphasizing the surprise of the U.S. military at the September 11 attacks. The reality is that, as much as the specifics

surprised the military, the general outline of a domestic terror attack designed to produce enormous casualties is not something that came shuttling out of the clear blue sky. In fact, there's a trail through yesterday's news that suggests an effort by those within the national security establishment who saw the threat developing to spread the alarm—and to push the inert body of that same establishment in the direction of meeting it.

Time, for instance, reported this in December 2000: "If you build it, they will come—some other way. And they're probably going to come some other way, anyway. That appears to be the bottom line in U.S. intelligence community thinking on the vexed question of missile defense.... And the bad news is that, while America will have no rival on the battlefield, it will be increasingly dogged by unconventional enemies against whom technological superiority isn't the same guarantor of victory." They did, in fact, come some other way, just about nine months later.

The attempts to sound an alarm were more often ignored, though, and then some. In June 2000, a national commission formed by Congress released a major report warning that terror attacks from overseas were increasingly likely. But Bruce Shapiro, a contributing editor at *The Nation*, was too smart to fall for the idea that terrorists might ever attack the U.S.; he cleverly broke down the truth about the report for readers of the online magazine *Salon*. The headline read, "The hyping of domestic terrorism: Why a new report on the threat of international terrorist attacks on U.S. soil is a con job."

The news stories you saw in the wake of the attacks alleging that the institutions of U.S. national security entirely failed to foresee their possibility were sometimes written by the same people who wrote the earlier stories describing—in some cases dismissing—the warnings. It's a fair guess that there are some awfully frustrated people in the military and intelligence communities right now.

But a posture of surprise in the face of widely available facts isn't really all that shocking, since it has a very particular utility to both the government and the media. It is, at just this moment, a comfort, and one that can be meshed neatly with the other popular media fictions about U.S. military potency. If they didn't see it coming, then the problem is one of foresight and the faulty prescience of a bunch of desk jockeys, rather than operational power. The eggheads in intelligence dropped the ball, but the warrior types are ready to make up for it.

But what does it mean if we did see it coming, and still couldn't stop it?

"We're in a period in which journalists are playing cheerleader," Herbert Gans tells me, a few days into the bombing campaign against Afghanistan. "It happens in the early stages of every one of these things."

Gans has taught sociology at Columbia University for 30 years; his most significant contribution to the understanding of the values of mainstream journalism took up 13 years of his early career, spanning most of the Vietnam War and beyond. Off and on, from 1965 to 1978, Gans set up camp in the newsrooms at *Time*, *Newsweek*, and two television networks, watching as editors and reporters considered which stories to cover. His book on the subject, *Deciding What's News* (1979), remains a landmark in understanding how information moves through media.

News organizations, Gans wrote, "conceive of the nation in anthropomorphic terms," so that news about crisis becomes primarily a test of "character and moral strength." With that

Here is one of those instances of falling through the looking glass: What do you say about wars that start out with mass murder, then develop order and boundaries of behavior?

emphasis on the health of the body, then, "American foreign news is ultimately only a variation on domestic themes"—of sickness, diagnosis, and cure.

Gans echoes that idea today. "All wars are always domestic stories," he says. "They're about our boys fighting."

If war news is about our boys, then the media-driven view of what our boys are like—of what they can do, and how—becomes a central question in our understanding of war. If someone attacks us, and we respond with military force, what happens?

October 2000 was a very different time than October 2001. In 2000, the most pressing issue facing the U.S. military—judging by media coverage—was the topic of hats. Gen. Eric Shinseki, the Army's chief of staff, had ordered every soldier in his organization to wear a black beret with his or her uniform while in garrison. For the last couple of decades, that piece of headgear had been exclusively associated with the Rangers, the elite force that carries machine guns and organizes in rifle companies of 200. News coverage focused on the insult to elite troops who would be forced to give up their special hats to ordinary enlistees; the Rangers, reporters calmly explained, were something not quite of this earth.

"One of the things you learn quickly in the military is to never, ever rile an Army Ranger, as foes have learned the hard way from Normandy to the Middle East," wrote *Chicago Tribune* reporter Michael Kilian, with near-audible grunts and chest blows. How tough are the Army's elite infantrymen? So tough, Kilian explained, that Rangers brag about parachuting into Alabama—and *walking* all the way back to Fort Benning, Georgia.

It's worth pointing out that Fort Benning, Georgia, sits on the Alabama border. In fact, part of Fort Benning sits *inside* Alabama, including the part with the parachute drop. Parachuting into Alabama and walking back to Fort Benning, Georgia, would require a Ranger to hike up a road a couple miles, and across a small bridge.

What happens, in this kind of reporting, is the awe of intimidation—inexperience deferring to experience. Back up, for a moment, to the *Washington Post* story about machine-gun-toting Rangers. If you don't know how a normal infantry unit is composed, or even what kind of weapons they ordinarily use, how confident are you going to be in questioning what a military officer tells you about what they've done? (How about the commander of a nuclear submarine, or a bomber wing?)

Kilian's remarkable piece in the *Tribune* ended with dire warnings that there was no earthly way the rest of the Army will possibly be permitted to switch to the black beret; the Rangers, he reported, are opposed. And that's that. In fact, he warned, there would probably even be violence if Rangers saw ordinary soldiers in their distinctive headgear.

"There are ways to get things done," Kilian quoted a retired Ranger as saying. "If we can't get it done through the front door, a lot of us unconventional warriors are going to get it done the unconventional way."

The rest of the Army converted to the black beret in June, right on schedule. The Rangers quietly switched to tan berets shortly after, and that was that.

There's a theme here that stretches between war and peace: In the case of military elites, things generally turn out to be less remarkable than reporters believe. None of which is to say that elite forces are anything less than exceptionally brave, highly trained, and unusually fit. But they are also something that you don't quite get from the news. They are men, often young men, with the standard-issue human body that still doesn't react well to bullets—or to chaos, confusion, and the horrible noise of battle. It's useful to remember that the first Ranger casualty in Mogadishu was an elite commando who fell off a helicopter.

Paul Fussell has seen all of this before. Having served as a combat infantryman in the war against Hitler's military, he came home to write an extraordinary book, *Wartime* (1990), about the way that news media communicate information. Fussell wrote about the tendency of reporters and editors to accentuate the positive, speak with one voice, adopt a posture of high-mindedness, and assert, in early stages, that war would be "fast-moving, mechanized, remote-controlled, and perhaps even rather easy." But his most telling chapter carried the heading, "The real war will never get in the books."

"What was it about war that moved the troops to constant verbal subversion and contempt?" Fussell asked. "It was not just the danger and the fear, the boredom and uncertainty and loneliness and deprivation. It was rather the conviction that optimistic publicity and euphemism had

rendered their experience so falsely that it would never be readily communicable."

Fussell lives in Pennsylvania, retired from a long career teaching literature. When I finally get him on the phone, he is not especially anxious to talk. But he has, in the first days of the U.S. campaign, been watching and reading the news, and has noticed the usual reporting about precision bombing and the sharply executed actions of elite ground troops.

"Those of us who've been through World War II know how empty that is," he says. "Americans have no idea what war is about. And it turns out to be about mass murder....It gets out of hand very quickly."

But here is one of those instances of falling through the looking glass: What do you say about wars that start out with mass murder, then develop order and boundaries of behavior? Just a few weeks after I spoke with Fussell, the news from Afghanistan began to suggest the possibility that the U.S. war there could genuinely be all of the things that war has always been sold as: fast-moving, mechanized, remote-controlled. And perhaps even rather easy.

It's impossible to say just how much that represents an accurate picture, and it probably will remain impossible for quite a while. It would be good to believe that the real war will get in the books; but even through the inevitable euphemism and optimistic publicity, it seems that something has changed. Superpowers have fought guerrilla forces before, relied on superior firepower, and lost. Air power proved empty, more than once, and then drove Al Qaeda and the Taliban to a desperate scramble for safety.

And so we're left with the question of what might be different—of how the dimensions of U.S. military power might have changed against the changing dimensions of irregular types of military power. We're left to decide—put it this way—whether the emerging revolution in military affairs might bring stability to a world undermined by the growing threat of asymmetric warfare.

It is, for now, a decision we have to make in the dark.

John Arquilla teaches at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, and is a consultant to the RAND Corporation. I call him at home on a weekday evening, and listen as his children ask for permission to watch *Get Smart* on cable. Then we get down to the subject at hand. He speaks quietly.

"This is not a surprise to most analysts, that this kind of warfare would emerge," he says. He is emphatic about calling it that: Terrorism, he says, has become a form of warfare. "Something wholly other is striking at us."

That something other has been developing for a long time, and in a number of particular dimensions. The recent trend is an increase in the lethality of small groups. Chechen fighters have demonstrated that against Russian troops, as have Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon.

Beyond a sharp upward spike in the killing power of small groups, Arquilla adds, the ability of terrorists to sustain prolonged campaigns—their strategic ability, along with their tactical reach—has grown with the emergence, globally, of "small, distributed networks." And they want something different from what terrorists have always wanted: They want casualties first, and publicity second. They are driven by the body count. "Many terrorism experts were reluctant to accept that," Arquilla says. "There's this old idea that terrorists want people watching, not people

Today's terrorists want something different from what terrorists have always wanted: They want casualties first, and publicity second. They are driven by the body count.

dead." The old idea hasn't caught up to emerging realities, he argues. Arquilla, among others, has been sounding this alarm for years—and sounding it from within the defense establishment, as a teacher of senior officers. But to what effect?

"What I see is a familiar pattern of awareness, but also dismissiveness," he says. "Our greatest enemy is our own habits of mind."

Those habits of mind are the product, in part, of victory. It's not a new story. Germany lost World War I on the weakness of the too-old Schlieffen Plan, and was driven to develop the blitzkrieg; France won, and settled down behind the Maginot Line. U.S. military officers are similarly comfortable with their place in the order of things. They have tended to win, and how can the winner be wrong? How can Desert Storm suggest a desperate need to bolt away in a new direction?

More than that, though, there is a deeply rooted problem of doctrine—one that is driven by culture. U.S. military thinking rests on the idea of the decisive victory won with overwhelming force. The emerging war of "hiders and finders," Arquilla says, is "not as soul-satisfying." And so we remain prepared to defeat the military of a major industrial enemy, in big set-piece battles. That preparedness comes at the expense of being prepared to fight nimbly in a world of small, quick players. The heavily industrialized U.S. military is also driven, in planning and budgeting, by the weight of its hardware. An infantry sergeant once explained this to me: "Our doctrine," he said, "is that we have a lot of stuff."

Arquilla agrees, and keeps hoping for change. "Keeping up our conventional military now is like keeping the landing lights on for Amelia Earhart," he says. He argues, for example, for a shift away from massive aircraft carrier groups to a shifting network of lighter craft—the "small and the many"—that will strike more quickly and require fewer assets in the service of platform defense. Whether or not this is what Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was getting at with his vague pre-Sept. 11 talk of military reform remains to be seen.

I mention *Unrestricted Warfare*, the book by the Chinese colonels, and we get to the heart of another big problem: Despite much reporting to the contrary, the kind of attack we've just seen isn't the exclusive property of a particular enemy. "To try to buttonhole this into the Islamic world is a dangerous illusion," Arquilla says, adding that we have to consider a world in which these kinds of attacks are "common, not rare."

That's a remarkable thought. It implies a national security infrastructure that is stuck in such a deep rut that it knows about the cliff but can't turn the steering wheel to avoid it.

"When I go to the Pentagon, I feel physically the locus of American power in the world," Arquilla says. "And yet every officer I meet there feels powerless to effect change."

Arquilla repeats my most important question back to me before answering. "What can accelerate the process? The experience of defeat."

Mike Meese and Russ Howard detail for me, at length, the steps they've taken at West Point to prepare their cadets for the new challenges they face. We discuss not just broad notions of doctrine and the face of future warfare, but also details regarding the course catalog, graduation requirements, and new approaches to teaching about different cultures and governments. And then I talk to several of their cadets.

I bring a prop to the conversations. A story in the September 15 *New York Times* advances what seems to me like a very dubious premise, and I read a few sentences over the phone to the first cadet. I'm reading sentences about what these future military officers purportedly expected from the world, pre-September 11, and I'm reading them so the cadets can say out loud how silly this all is. Most cadets here, the story says, were aware only of the likelihood that they were "preparing for careers as peacemakers or peacekeepers." And then "all of that changed on Tuesday morning," with the attacks on New York and Washington. My first question is meant to be a big hanging softball, in the style of reporters who've already decided what the story is: You didn't *really* believe that there could never be another war in your lifetime, now, did you?

But I never get a chance to ask. As I'm reading these sentences asserting that the Army's next generation of officers were unprepared for war, unprepared for terrorism, and expecting only a gentle world of light-policing duties in the Balkan hill country, the cadet begins to agree. "Yes, sir," he says. "That is my perspective, correct."

But he was aware that war was still possible, he adds, and that he's willing to fight. Next year, when he chooses

his branch, he'll be putting in for field artillery. He's a big fan of the Paladin, a heavy self-propelled artillery piece that fairly screams of the need to stop the Soviets in the Fulda Gap.

"Field artillery is the big guns, the king of battle," he says. And that it is. Just don't ask in which century.

Another cadet answers my questions with more questions: What do we do now? Who do you go after? What happens with our Arab allies? A third agrees that domestic terrorism "didn't really seem like a threat."

"I'm not quite sure if we have classes that focus on terrorism," she says. "I'm a history major, so...."

And so there's an extraordinary disconnect, somewhere within the culture of the military, in which the leading-edge ideas contained in all of those reports are getting to the really sharp colonels, the really smart analysts, and no one else. Which is, in its way, not that surprising. Very large organizations frequently have trouble moving ideas through every internal subculture, and the military—especially when it won its last war—has a deep natural conservatism of habit. But there are supposed to be catalysts in society that move recalcitrant organizations forward by exposing information, by pushing reality and forcing hard questions to the front. Absent that kind of informed and aggressive questioning, the whole thing reverts to its natural state. Bodies at rest tend to stay at rest, unless acted upon by an outside force.

I mention to John Arquilla a speech I once heard. The retired Army General Barry McCaffrey—the former drug czar—was speaking. If some really smart person in the Army gets a really great idea, he said, and it makes all the sense in the world—well, then, you'll see it in your battalions in 15 years. Arquilla isn't sure McCaffrey got the number right.

"I'd say 20," he says. "Because change is generational."

As domestic terror attacks threaten to become "common, not rare," and one of the primary institutions charged with defending against those attacks undergoes a glacial revolution in the way it does business, we're stuck wondering how to monitor as well as make demands upon that shifting mechanism of protection. What counts? What do we watch for? The persistent problem carries over from the innocent days before we remembered the urgency of the questions.

Some journalists have bothered to dig deeper, and it's worth noting what the last few years have been like for them. In the July/August 2001 issue of the *American Journalism Review*, writer Lucinda Fleeson discussed the frustrations of a reporter at the Scripps Howard newspaper chain who covered the U.S. military. Before Sept. 11, reporter Lisa Hoffman was already writing stories about the growing significance of things like "cyberwar" and attacks on non-military infrastructure. In the U.S. campaign against Serbia, she wrote, Pentagon planners looked for ways to disrupt Serb computer and telephone networks. But most Scripps Howard newspapers gave Lisa Hoffman's stories on the new face of war little or no play. Hoffman's boss, Scripps Howard Editor and General Manager Peter Copeland, had an explanation. "It's just that they're not committing news anymore at the Pentagon," he said.

"To create the perfect killing machine," the conservative columnist David Horowitz wrote in June, arguing with remarkable logic against allowing gays to serve, "the military works hard to drain recruits of their individuality and their self-interested desires in order to make them think like cogs in a machine. An essential part of the military mind is that members don't think for themselves but do as they are told."

Is there anyone left who thinks that what we most need are troops who consider it a hallmark of discipline that they "don't think"? For so many of the people who write about the military, wars, soldiers, and serving your country are vague concepts—but that's no reason not to talk about them. ■

Chris Bray (chrisabray@yahoo.com) served as an infantryman in the peacetime Army.

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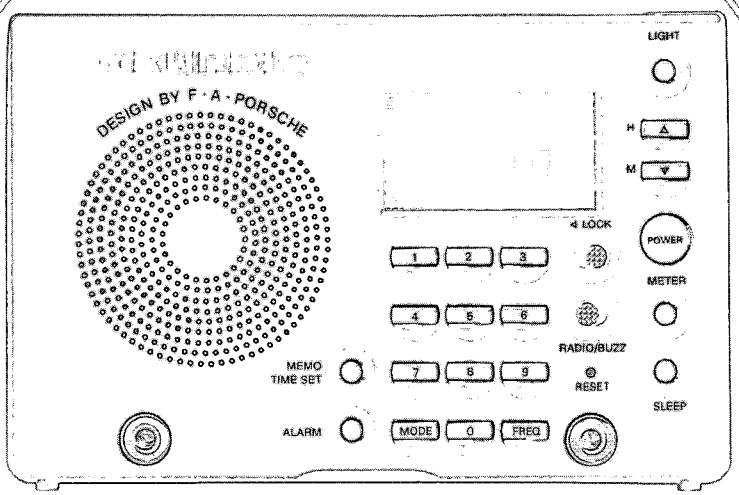

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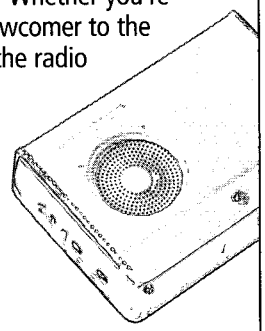

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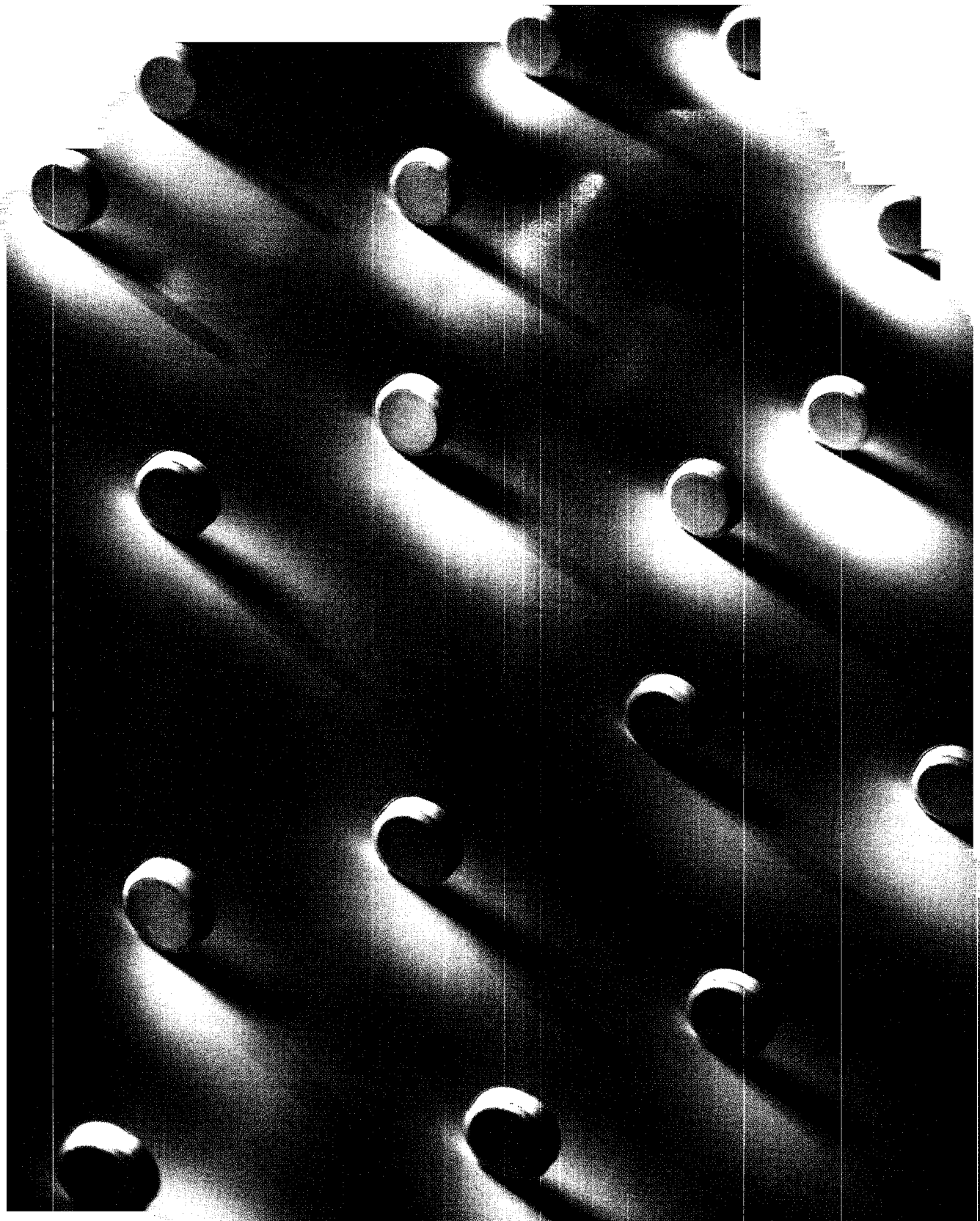

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Prescription Panic

How the anthrax scare challenged drug patents

Mike Godwin

BEFORE SEPTEMBER 11, U.S. policy toward pharmaceutical patents was clear: The interests of the patent holder came first. However, the anthrax scare that surfaced in October has managed to shake that policy to its roots. By the time the shaking was done and the original scare had subsided, Bayer Corporation, the Pittsburgh-based American subsidiary of the German pharmaceutical giant Bayer AG, had managed to hold onto its patent monopoly over the manufacture and sale of the powerful antibiotic ciprofloxacin, now familiar to Americans by its brand name, Cipro.

How that happened provides a lesson in how both public health issues and certain types of intellectual property rights have been affected by the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, as well as by the mail-based anthrax attacks. Perhaps more important, in a world in which threats of bioterror are only likely to increase, the tug of war between Bayer and the government over Cipro hints at how even governments that nominally give patent protection a high priority are likely to compromise their principles in the face of a perceived public health threat—at least when that threat faces their own citizens.

Increasingly over the last two decades, American pharmaceutical policy has favored the interests of the patent holder. The U.S. has labored to discourage foreign governments from breaking pharmaceutical patents and buying unauthorized generics from India or China—two nations widely recognized as the major exporters of unauthorized generic drugs. When necessary, the U.S. has used trade barriers and various other types of political pressure to keep non-compliant governments in line.

"For 20 years, it's been the policy of the U.S. government to tighten the screws on foreign governments over intellectual property rights, particularly with medicine," says James Love, director of the Consumer Project on Technology, a Washington, D.C.-based public interest group critical of the pharmaceutical industry.

This approach is reflected in Article 31 of the World Trade Organization's Trade Related Agreement on Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). That agreement requires governments to honor patents. If a government needs or wants to exploit a patented invention, it must ask the patent holder for authorization and offer "reasonable compensation" for the privilege.

Love, whose group promotes global access to "essential" medicines, says the hard-line American policy "started in the Reagan era," when the push toward globalized trade began. To critics like Love this policy seems harsh, but its logic is clear: Without a worldwide framework in which each nation honors and enforces other nations' patent rights, it's possible for nations not bound by patent agreements to flood the world market with cheap generic drugs. Drug companies wouldn't be able to price their products high enough to guarantee a return on their research investment.

Furthermore, the argument goes, if you undermine the patent incentive system, you won't get the new drugs that are needed to address new health crises. "You wouldn't have Cipro if there wasn't a patent," says Mark Grayson, senior director of public affairs for the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), the drug industry's association in Washington. (See "Goddamn the Pusher Man," April 2001.)

Historically, PhRMA's view has been more or less shared by the U.S. government. So in the late 1990s, when Brazil faced a problem in providing government-subsidized access to affordable AIDS drugs and the Brazilian government authorized

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The U.S. might want to contract with Bayer, which makes the anti-anthrax drug Cipro, for a new product: irony supplements. Why? Almost every aspect of the anthrax panic in the United States and in Canada was overblown.

the domestic production of generic knock-offs of American drugs, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick announced that "the U.S. won't hesitate in using its total strength and international laws to modify the situation."

Although the U.S. approves of anti-AIDS generic-drug programs in impoverished countries such as Senegal and Uganda, it stops short of approving compulsory licensing or patent-breaking in so-called Middle Income Countries such as Brazil, which have an adequate gross domestic product and industrial base to support the purchasing of brand-name pharmaceuticals. Given this history of strong patent enforcement by the U.S., Bayer may well have been confident about its own patent rights when anthrax panic triggered a run on Cipro. But Bayer's status was in fact anything but secure.

Bayer's drug division could certainly have used the windfall: Market analysts were predicting that it would likely end 2001 in the red. Cipro was already looking like Bayer's lucky charm; the drug generated $1.6 billion in sales last year for the company, out of $10.1 billion in revenue overall. Sales volume in the aftermath of the anthrax panic could only increase.

Patented in the early '80s, Cipro until recently was best known as a treatment for bladder infections and other, more common conditions than anthrax. It's often the antibiotic of choice when infecting organisms are resistant to other kinds of antibiotics. The period of patent protection is 17–20 years, and the drug's U.S. patent is set to expire in 2003. Cipro was the first drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration for treatment of anthrax infections, receiving the FDA's blessing in 2000, even though the drug had not been tested on humans as an anti-anthrax treatment. (Until a few months ago, no one in the U.S. had had anthrax since the 1970s, so there was no existing base of anthrax patients available for testing.)

Cipro's major anthrax tests were conducted over a decade ago by U.S. Army biowarfare researchers—on rhesus monkeys. Still, the FDA (and not, surprisingly, Bayer) pushed for, and rushed through, approval of Cipro as an anthrax treatment, primarily because of fears that Iraq's Saddam Hussein might resort to an anthrax-based terror attack. The broad-spectrum antibiotic did not do better than some other antibiotics when the rhesus monkeys were treated, but it had at least one advantage the others lacked. Ciprofloxacin is not part of the penicillin or tetracycline families of antibiotics, which means that if foreign nations (or, for that matter, the U.S.) managed to develop strains of anthrax that were resistant to penicillin or tetracycline, Cipro would remain an effective therapy.

When the first cases of anthrax infection and exposure were publicized, it was only natural that the FDA and the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control started recommending prophylactic treatment with Cipro. Accordingly, everyone who was exposed or at risk—from Tom Brokaw to New York City postal workers—starting taking Cipro. Even those who weren't at risk found ways to get a prescription. In New York City, there was a sudden run on the drug, and some pharmacies were forced to post signs saying they could issue only 10-day supplies of Cipro.

Suddenly the question became, Would there be enough Cipro to go around? In addition, the U.S. and Canadian governments were entering the market as well—as buyers in bulk. The U.S. government alone decided to purchase 100 million or more doses.

The government balked, however, at Cipro's price tag. The standard to-the-government price was $1.83 per pill.

(The standard wholesale price to pharmacies is about twice that.) There were strong hints that Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson would "break" the Bayer patent, perhaps through compulsory licensing, if Bayer would not sell to the government at a lower price.

Thompson also stated, somewhat controversially, that the government lacks current statutory authority to sidestep Bayer's patent. James Love and Ralph Nader promptly co-authored a public letter to Thompson arguing that current law—specifically Title 28, Section 1498, of the United States Code—was more than adequate authority for such a move. That law provides for "reasonable and entire compensation" to the patent holder when the United States "uses" a patented invention without a license. Compensation is, however, the only remedy—the patent holder can't sue to stop the government from using his patent.

PhRMA's Grayson disputes this reading of the law. He calls the statute a provision for "eminent domain" compensation, and says it does not trump the U.S.'s obligation as a WTO/TRIPS signatory to try to work with the patent holder first before even considering breaking the patent.

Complicating matters even more was the question of supply. If the U.S. didn't break its patent, could Bayer's limping pharmaceutical division produce hundreds of millions of Cipro doses on a short timeline? Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), a longtime critic of the pharmaceutical industry, didn't think so. On October 16, he issued a press release calling for Thompson's Department of Health and Human Services to go ahead and order up generics. "First, Bayer can only produce so much Cipro," said Schumer. "And we should not put our best response to anthrax in the hands of just one manufacturer. Second, buying Cipro only from Bayer—who charges a lot more than generic manufacturers would—means we spend a lot more and receive a lot less."

In Grayson's view, this was "political grandstanding," an opportunistic use of the anthrax scare to promote Schumer's longstanding efforts to make generic drugs more available. Schumer had introduced a bill to increase access to generic drugs last May, along with Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.).

Grayson says he is more inclined to forgive Thompson his early "I'm a tough negotiator" rhetoric. Nicolas Barzoukas, a partner in the Houston office of the law firm Howrey, Simon Arnold & White, insists that the beleaguered HHS secretary "was never planning to break the patent." Barzoukas' firm represents Merck & Company, the country's second-largest drug company in terms of sales. He argues that breaking the Bayer patent would have had hugely negative consequences in the long term. "The problem," says Barzoukas, "is that you can do it [break a patent] one time, but that kills the incentive for drug companies down the road." The pharmaceutical companies responsible for innovative new drugs need to have control of their patents in order to make the kind of profits necessary to subsidize new research. "Forty percent to 50 percent of pharmaceutical innovation takes place in the U.S.," says Barzoukas.

What's more, Barzoukas says, if Bayer really is unable to produce enough Cipro, the fix is still to contract with Bayer. The company can meet new demand by licensing the patent to other manufacturers. This is the kind of resolution that allows Bayer to maintain the long-term value of its patent, and set prices for Cipro in private transactions, while still meeting the demands of the government during a public health crisis.

Such considerations did not shake the skepticism of some U.S. officials about Bayer's ability to produce Cipro. This feeling was echoed by at least some Canadian officials. In Canada, the campaign against Bayer's Cipro patent rights took a radical turn when Health Canada, the Canadian public health agency, placed an order for generic supplies of Cipro with another company.

What prompted Canada's response? According to Neil Belmore, a partner in the Toronto law firm Gowling, LaFleur & Henderson, the real issue in Canada was less one of a public-policy change than one of a lower-level Health Canada functionary who jumped the gun in placing an order. Belmore represents Bayer AG's Canadian subsidiary and attended an October negotiating session with officials of Health Canada in the agency's Ottawa offices. In the course of discussions it became clear that the Health Canada official who ordered the generic Cipro had departed from longstanding Canadian practice. Canadian law regarding compulsory licensing requires, among other things, prior approval of the ministry of industry's patent commissioner. No such prior approval had been sought, no official emer-

Whether the close-to-home aspect of the anthrax attacks will make the U.S. more sympathetic to African nations—who actually do face a large-scale public health crisis with AIDS—remains to be seen.

gency had been declared, and the record of communications between Health Canada and Bayer was sufficiently muddled that the agency quickly backed off its order.

In fact, by the end of the negotiating session, the agency had agreed to publish a joint press release with Bayer, acknowledging the validity of the company's Canadian patent (due to expire in 2004). The press release also reaffirmed that Bayer would be Canada's sole supplier of emergency Cipro and would soon provide 900,000 tablets for that country's emergency stockpile. Why, if the government backed down so fast, had it ordered generic Cipro in the first place? Nobody knows for sure, says Belmore, since no senior official will take responsibility for the decision. "I can only speculate as to what internal pressures there were within the government" that might have led to the order, Belmore says. "It was an extremely fluid situation."

The same week Canada announced its resolution, over in the U.S. Thompson proclaimed a negotiating victory. The U.S. would buy Cipro from Bayer at just under $1 per dose, or close to half of the previous standard-to-the-government price. Bayer presented itself as equally upbeat. "We had a professional and satisfactory meeting today with HHS Secretary Thompson and his staff," said Bayer Corp. president Helge Wehmeier just before Thompson's announcement. "Within 10 minutes we came to a handshake agreement," Wehmeier now says.

"It took some time for contracts to be worked out," he adds. "It took 24 hours, and that may sound like a long time, but as [HHS] smilingly told us, it was the fastest time in living memory that they actually drew up a contract." Bayer Corp. also announced that it was tripling its production of Cipro tablets, and that it would ship 200 million tablets over the next three months, with 100 million of those tablets to be purchased outright by the U.S. government at the new negotiated price, and as many as 300 million total set to be purchased by the government.

Did the same factors underlie the apparent turnabouts in both Canada and the U.S.? Perhaps. Bayer AG's assurances that it could meet increased demand for its anthrax drug surely played a role. "We can fully cover the demand for Cipro tablets as defined by the Canadian and the U.S. governments," said Bayer AG chief executive Manfred Schneider on October 23. Schneider acknowledged that even with the discount, the transaction would be profitable for Bayer, whose per-unit manufacturing cost of Cipro is estimated by the Amsterdam-based Health Action International, a drug-policy watchdog group, to be under 5 cents U.S. (Schneider makes a point of adding that Bayer's drug division will still end the year in the red.)

That the drug division is still limping along in spite of what could have been a much larger Cipro windfall is ironic, since the U.S. and Canadian governmental policy has been to use the patent system to create the very possibility of such a windfall—that is, to make profits that subsidize long-term research and development of new drugs by the pharmaceutical companies. So much for policy, though—when the anthrax panic gripped Washington and Ottawa, the result was that in both countries Bayer had to give up a huge amount of profit. Put bluntly, Bayer was told—directly and indirectly—to cut the government price and get some profit or keep it at its pre-September 11 price and risk losing what are likely to be the two most profitable years of the patent.

Another calming factor: We now know that Cipro isn't

the only anthrax remedy out there. Amoxycillin and doxycycline are now known to be equally effective, and some public officials have gone so far as to say that just about every antibiotic currently known will work. But perhaps the primary reason for the governments' sudden turn was the prospect of an important upcoming WTO conference, scheduled for mid-November in Doha, Qatar. On the top of the agenda was the question of abiding by pharmaceutical patents. Western nations planned to argue for upholding their pharmaceutical industries' patents under TRIPS. African nations planned on arguing their right to produce or purchase cheaper generic drugs in response to the AIDS crisis in Africa.

The "Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health" that emerged from the Doha meeting had one foot squarely on each side of the dispute. Member nations were reminded that TRIPS permits nations to engage in compulsory licensing of drug patents during public health emergencies. Developing nations were also assured that developed nations would provide them with the technology necessary to take advantage of TRIPS's compulsory-licensing provisions—such as when a developing nation needs to build a pharmaceutical factory to manufacture its own generic AIDS drugs.

In light of the WTO negotiations, the U.S. might want to contract with Bayer, which makes One-A-Day vitamins, for a new product: irony supplements. Why? Almost every aspect of the anthrax panic in the United States and in Canada was overblown. Despite the sheer viciousness of the anthrax-letter attacks, the actual impact on public health was and is small. In early December, fewer than 20 people have actually contracted the disease, and only a handful have died. By contrast, according to CDC statistics and other sources, there are likely to be 20,000 or more influenza-related fatalities in the U.S. in any given flu season.

One shouldn't diminish the impact of October's anthrax attacks. They were the first bioterror incidents of their kind in the U.S. They were immensely public and yet they remain mysterious. More than anything, those factors explain the speed with which policy makers put compulsory licensing on the table in their negotiations with Bayer. Whether the close-to-home aspect of the anthrax attacks will make the U.S. more sympathetic to the arguments of African nations—who actually do face a large-scale public health crisis—remains to be seen.

Critics of the pharmaceutical industry such as the Consumer Project on Technology's Love and Sen. Schumer argue that drug companies should not be allowed to profit unduly from a public health crisis, if and when one emerges. But PhRMA's Grayson insists that declaring war on drug company profits is not the answer. If a bioterror epidemic does occur—an outbreak of "weaponized" smallpox infections is everyone's worst-case scenario—Grayson says the only way enough smallpox vaccine will be produced is if the government enlists the help of industry. According to Grayson, "They won't be able to make enough vaccine without having a lot of industry support."

Of course, the brand-name drug industry is already showing its support for the government's anti-terrorism efforts. Representatives of pharmaceutical companies have promised to provide doxycyline and amoxycillin, and perhaps other drugs, to the national stockpile free of charge, provided the FDA quickly approves the use of these drugs as anti-anthrax therapies. Industry lobbyists are quick to describe this effort as public-spirited, but it's also good public relations. If the brand-name drug companies build up enough good will in their response to this public health issue, they may be less fearful that their patents will be at stake when the next big disease scare happens. ▯

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Threatened by Success

One charter school's fight against the education establishment

Joanne Jacobs

In 1998, Edison Schools Inc., the country's leading for-profit school management company, took over one of San Francisco's worst schools, coincidentally named Thomas Edison Elementary. By its third year, the K–5 school, now renamed Edison Charter Academy, was on the way up. Its once rock-bottom test scores had risen in every grade and every subject for every racial/ethnic group. Black and Latino students, who make up 83 percent of enrollment, had made the greatest gains. Violence was down. Enrollment was up. Parents were enthusiastic.

"I like it," says Karen Aldana, who graduated from Edison Charter's fifth grade in June. She enjoyed the "Success for All" reading program and the charter school's "specials," music, art, Spanish, and physical education (P.E.) "She can read perfectly in English and Spanish," says her mother proudly.

"It's so clearly working," says Allegra Harrison, whose daughter is an Edison Charter third grader. Not everyone agreed. In January 2001, halfway through the company's five-year contract, the San Francisco school board launched a campaign to revoke the charter and take back the school. Board president Jill Wynns, who told the press she's "philosophically opposed to for-profit management," was supported by two newly elected trustees, Mark Sanchez, who taught at Thomas Edison in the pre-charter days, and Eric Mar, a lawyer and ethnic studies lecturer at San Francisco State whose wife is active in the local teachers union.

Six months later, however, the board backed down. Edison Schools Inc. now runs the school under a charter from the State Board of Education. The Battle of Edison Charter turned on competing ideas about accountability. To its enemies, Edison Charter Academy wasn't accountable to the public—that is, to the elected school board—but rather to corporate execs in New York City and the company's stockholders. But most people want schools held accountable for their performance, and that is what the school board failed to understand. Edison Charter Academy survived because it had higher test scores and satisfied parents.

It was a battle between education and a school board's ideology. This time, education won.

Although its school-board critics thought they were mounting an attack on corporate interests, they instead found themselves battling parents. More than 80 percent of those parents signed a petition supporting Edison Charter when it came under attack. In such a face-off, not even the teachers union would side with the board. It was a battle, in other words, between education and a school board's ideology. This time, education won. This is the story of that struggle.

San Francisco's school board oversees a district with dramatic inequities between its best and worst schools, and an enrollment scheme that strongly favors savvy parents who know how to work the system to get their kids into the good schools. That means that the city's bad schools only get worse as they become dumping grounds for the most difficult students.

The board's finances are such a mess that state legislators have threatened to place the district under state receivership. In May, an audit by the Andersen accounting firm

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found that, since 1997, $30 million earmarked for school construction had been spent improperly on salaries. The *San Francisco Chronicle* uncovered records showing $60 million in construction bonds diverted to salaries since 1989. Superintendent Arlene Ackerman announced an FBI investigation into the district's handling of a $50 million federal technology grant and a $32 million energy-savings contract.

Given all the problems in the San Francisco Unified School District, why did the school board pick a fight with Edison? In part, it was about money. In 1998, a flamboyant, free-spending superintendent named Bill Rojas had pushed the charter through, shortly afterward decamping for Dallas. (Rojas now works for Advantage Schools, an Edison competitor.) Wynns thought Rojas had given Edison a sweetheart contract that failed to charge the corporation for busing, rent on the school, or administrative services, such as passing through federal and state funding and handling payroll. She claimed the Edison deal was costing the district $1,000 a student. (A charter elementary in a rent-free school typically pays the district 3 percent of its revenues—$125 to $180 per student—to cover administrative and building costs.) Yet at the same time, Edison's critics were complaining that the corporation was putting too much money into the school. With donations and stockholders' money, the company was able to fund extras—music, art, Spanish, P.E., technology, a longer school day—that other city elementary students don't get. It wasn't fair.

Ultimately, the school board kept coming back to intangible reasons for revoking the charter. "I am absolutely thinking about what's best for kids and parents at Edison," Wynns said in January when she announced her crusade to revoke the contract. "I truly believe that Edison has damaged our sense of cohesiveness about public education. This has fractured our community."

But Edison Charter principal Vincent Matthews questioned the board's motives. "Is their bottom line ideology or student achievement?" The school's parents believe they know what's best for their own kids. The problem with Edison Charter, they say, is not that it's not educating Latino and black children. It's that it's educating them too well. According to them, San Francisco Unified can't stand to see a corporation succeed at a school where the district failed for so many years.

"What are they really afraid of?" asks Lupe Hernandez, parent of a second grader. "That the success will continue? That people will find out about it?" Hernandez chose Edison Charter for its curriculum, longer day, and uniforms; she also wanted her son taught in English, but with the chance to develop his Spanish in World Languages class. Despite his Attention Deficit Disorder, her son learned to read in kindergarten and now reads above grade level. "It has been nice to see how far he can go," she says.

Hernandez looked at private school alternatives when the board threatened to revoke Edison's charter and take back the school. To get the same quality at a private or parochial school would cost her $7,000 a year, she says.

Robyn Amos, a high school teacher in a neighboring district, was impressed by the challenging curriculum, engaged students, and community spirit. Teachers are willing to work with difficult students, says Amos, who is black. Her fourth grader is now on track in reading, after falling behind at her old school. "I see sparks now," says Amos. "It's happening for her."

Heather Mobley praises the quarterly meetings in which parent, student, and teacher agree on shared objectives. "I'm a business person," says Mobley, who works in marketing. "This is how you track progress." She doesn't care if Edison makes a profit. "If I'm getting everything I dreamed of for my children, why would I care if they're able to return a profit to their shareholders?"

The Charter Revolution

Charter schools are tax-funded, tuition-free public schools with some of the freedoms of private schools. Instead of regulating how charters teach, states are supposed to judge by results: Are students learning?

The first charter school opened in 1992 in Minnesota. Now, more than 2,000 charter schools are educating half a million students in 34 states and the District of Columbia. Most are started by teachers, parents, universities, community groups, and other nonprofits.

Typically, these schools are underfunded, thin on management, and dependent on donated legal services. However, about 10 percent are run by school management companies that are—in theory, if not in fact—for-profit businesses. They are run by professional managers, staffed by

In the public school system, nothing succeeds like failure. Failure is rewarded with more money for more programs, more specialists, and, of course, more failure. Success is a risky business.

lawyers, and much harder to bully. Their pitch is simple: If we succeed in running good schools, we'll attract students and make a profit. If we fail, take back the school and try something else. That's not the way things are usually done in the public school system. Traditionally, nothing succeeds like failure. Failure is rewarded with more money for more programs, more specialists, and, of course, more failure. Success, on the other hand, is a risky business. It destroys excuses. It raises expectations. It's even worse when a profit-seeking business succeeds with high-risk students. If customer-serving, bottom-line-adding businesses can run schools, that opens the door to a host of market evils: Independently run charter schools staffed by non-unionized teachers. Voucher-empowered parents shopping for their schools of choice. Teachers deprived of political power and turned from selfless public servants to soulless corporate employees.

In many cities, school officials have given up on improving schools that serve large numbers of low-income minority students from troubled families. If school districts really are held accountable for results, they'll be motivated to turn over their no-hope schools to outside management. If scores remain low, it's the charter's fault. If scores rise, the board can take credit for bringing in new management.

In the short run, it's a low-risk strategy. In the long run, it's a significant threat to public education as we know it. If corporate profit-seekers can out-educate the educators, why not privatize the whole system? Pennsylvania, planning to take over the troubled Philadelphia schools, hired Edison to analyze the district's academic and financial chaos. Edison came back with a bold proposal to take over management of the district itself, handing the lowest-performing schools to private managers, including Edison and its competitors.

For-profit education is a $100 billion industry, says Michael Sandler of eduventure.com, which analyzes the education sector. That includes companies that supply books, desks, crayons, and computers, as well as firms that offer distance-learning systems, tutoring, and counseling services. School management companies are the most controversial, because they're in direct competition with public school bureaucracies.

When the Education Industry Leadership Board, a new industry advocacy group led by Sandler, met with Education Department officials, the talk was about measuring results, says program director Lenore Ealy. "They want proof, proof, proof. Show us you're improving performance."

While school management companies remain a small force in public education, they're growing rapidly thanks to the charter school movement. Edison runs 113 public schools in 45 cities, contracting with local districts to take over failing schools or to set up charters. The company says it can create efficiencies by centralizing business services, curriculum design, and teacher training, eventually turning a profit. Also in the business are Mosaica Schools, National Heritage Academies, LearnNow, Advantage Schools Inc., Beacon Management, The Tesseract Group, Sabis Educational Systems, The Leona Group, and Charter Schools USA.

Some offer a structured curriculum, using programs such as Success for All reading, Core Knowledge, and Direct Instruction. Others lean to the progressive side of education, promising lots of hands-on, thematic learning. A few companies let each school develop its own style. Most offer a longer school day and year, which raises costs; they often hire lots of young—often uncredentialed—teachers, which is cheaper.

Test results for Edison-run schools are mixed; in some cities, there's little evidence Edison is outperforming its district-run competition. However, the company's school design gets high marks from educators. A study by Columbia University's Teacher's College, done for the National Education Association (NEA), praised the company for investing in teacher training and holding schools accountable. "The cohesiveness of the curriculum, the quality of the curriculum, and the breadth of the curriculum gives [sic] teachers (including experienced teachers) a set of guidelines, activities, and assessments upon which they can rely," the report said. "The classroom culture promotes learning....Most Edison schools are safe, orderly and energized, although some of the schools are experiencing difficulty in implementing the Edison design because of its complexity."

The report, presented to the NEA in December 2000, urged the teachers union to "take an active role regarding future collaborations with for-profit companies by creating a set of criteria that will guarantee quality and ensure that all children receive a just and productive education." In other words, if you can't beat 'em, coopt 'em.

The School Board Strikes Back

Whether the unions take the advice remains to be seen. However, in San Francisco, the California Teachers Association sat out the fight to revoke the Edison charter, points out Gary Larson, who volunteered to help Parents To Save Edison Charter. Edison Charter parents and children turned out in force at school board meetings. "The unions don't want to take on the parents," says Larson, now information director for the California Network of Educational Charters.

Opponents will fight fiercely to keep a for-profit school from opening. Unions allied with ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), a community organizing group, to keep Edison from taking over five failing schools in Harlem. After a bitter campaign, parents overwhelmingly rejected Edison. They preferred the fifth-rate schools they knew to a vague promise of something better. According to Larson, ACORN's attack on "privatization" led some parents to believe they'd have to pay tuition if Edison ran the schools.

But once a school has evidence of improvement and a militant parents' group, only the true believers are willing to fight. In San Francisco, a union town with left-liberal leadership, the school board's anti-privatization campaign drew surprisingly little support. Its charge that Edison Charter was pushing out poor black students fizzled. The black community seemed more interested in starting its own charters than in helping the board close one down.

The corporation's PR effort was simple: Keep talking about the test scores. Stories in the *Chronicle*, the *San Francisco Examiner*, and the San Francisco–based *Salon* magazine stressed the school's rising test scores and satisfied parents. So did a *New York Times* story. Editorials in local newspapers backed the charter. The *Examiner* called the board's campaign "bizarre" and "surreal." *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Economist* attacked the school board as anti-privatization zealots.

The board's allies came primarily from Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth, a "progressive" nonprofit devoted to children's services, and from a small number of parents convinced that Edison Charter was competing unfairly with district-run schools and getting more public money than their own children's schools.

Caroline Grannan, a parent in the district and a Wynns supporter, fired off letters and e-mails accusing Edison of manipulating test scores, underplaying costs, and selecting its students. Traditional public schools look bad in comparison to choice schools because they're stuck with the children of apathetic parents, Grannan argues. "This hit me two years ago, when my son was in a third-grade class with five students (25 percent of the class)—all boys, all ethnicities—that no private school would ever have allowed across its threshold under any circumstances."

But, as parent Linda Gausman notes bitterly, Edison Charter's critics don't have kids at third-rate schools. "They're predominately white women with children at white-Asian schools." Gausman's daughter, who is black, was assigned to a school where crack addicts and prostitutes lounged outside.

Teachers inside had to buy supplies with their own money, says Gausman. By second grade, the girl had fallen behind in reading. Gausman had tried for two years to get a transfer—she tried Grannan's elementary school—but found all the desirable public schools have long wait lists. She was delighted to find a spot at Edison Charter. "I've seen

The most damaging allegation was that Edison Charter "counseled out" poor, black, and special education students, dumping them into other schools to improve its test scores. But the district's case was weak.

such growth in her," she says of her child, now entering fifth grade. "I started seeing a can-do attitude."

In March, school-board trustees said they'd revoke the charter but keep Edison Charter's principal, staff, and curriculum—with some compromises and cuts. None of the parents believed it. Says Mobley, whose children are in third and fifth grades at Edison Charter, the real message to parents was, "We want to return you to the failure of the past."

The Rebirth of Thomas Edison

Before the Edison takeover, Thomas Edison Elementary was San Francisco's unchoice school. It was the place for kids whose parents, stumped by the district's byzantine enrollment system, had failed to choose something better. Disruptive students "counseled out"—that is, pushed out—of their original schools were dumped at Thomas Edison. White middle-class parents from neighboring Noe Valley abandoned the school. Most of the students were—and still are—Latino immigrants from the nearby Mission, along with black students bused in from low-income Bayview-Hunter's Point.

In the 1980s, the school was cited in a National Association for the Advancement of Colored People lawsuit charging that minority students were getting an unequal education. Twice in the 1980s and 1990s, San Francisco Unified "reconstituted" the school—replacing the principal and teachers. It didn't help. Students fought in the classrooms and washrooms, roamed the hallways and wandered the neighborhood. Evaluators noted that reading and math scores were abysmal, even compared to other schools with poor black and Hispanic students. Scores continued to drop at Thomas Edison while other city elementary schools were improving.

Ken Romines, principal from 1993 to 1995, described Thomas Edison as an "academic pariah" in his 1997 book, *A Principal's Story*. There was no reading program. The average fifth grader read at a second grade level. Each year of his two-year stint, 50 percent to 70 percent of teachers quit.

In 1997, an outside evaluator, Stanley A. Schainker, called Thomas Edison "educationally bankrupt," with the lowest test scores in the city. It was, wrote Schainker, "the most dysfunctional elementary school that I have seen in my 35 years in education." In the 1997-98 school year, Thomas Edison went through four principals. A *Chronicle* story noted how the survivor, Barbara Karvelis, dealt with the chaos. She "sent children with severe discipline problems to other schools."

That was when Rojas, then the school superintendent, cut a deal to hand over the school to Edison Schools Inc. Karvelis stayed on as principal. The company got a rent-free building, $4,200 per student from the state, plus federal and state grants for low-performing, low-income, and non-English-speaking students. Don Fisher, a San Francisco businessman and philanthropist, promised $1.5 million to refurbish the school and fund technology.

As Edison Charter Academy, the school offers a longer day and year and a structured academic curriculum, including Success for All, a national reading program used in all Edison Inc. elementary schools. All students take Spanish, taught as a foreign language. Students in third grade and up get a laptop to take home. Teachers spend two periods a day meeting with colleagues to discuss improving teaching. They meet every few months with parents.

In 1999, Schainker returned for another visit.

Watching the Numbers

Unlike district schools, Edison Charter must succeed to survive.

WHILE RISING TEST scores on California's statewide test saved Edison Charter Academy from takeover by the San Francisco Unified School District, falling test scores have now put the charter's future at risk.

Spring 2001 test scores were announced August 15, two months after Edison Charter's charter was transferred from the district to the State Board of Education. Edison Charter's reading and math scores, which had risen sharply for the school's first two years, were down in virtually every grade and subject.

On the state's Academic Performance Index, Edison was the lowest-ranked elementary school in San Francisco—just like the district-run school that the charter replaced.

Scores remain above the school's 1999 level, but the numbers are very low. Only 23 percent of students tested at or above grade level in reading, compared to 32 percent the year before; only 32 percent make the grade in math, down from 42 percent. Students do better the longer they attend Edison Charter, says principal Vincent Matthews. Edison's cohort analysis found fourth and fifth graders did better than they had the year before. But third graders did worse than they had as second graders. And the 2001 second grade scores are dismal.

"The amount of time we spent defending ourselves—all those late-night board meetings, all the media tours—we could have used that time to educate students," says Matthews. "It was a distraction."

To Edison opponents, the scores proved the school was a fraud. Caroline Grannan, a critic of the school, e-mailed the press: "After months of publicity by New York-based Edison Schools claiming superior gains and implying superior performance to San Francisco districtwide schools...Edison Charter students scored significantly below districtwide students in every category both in spring 2000 and in the newly released spring 2001 results."

It's not uncommon for schools that post a large rise in scores one year to dip the next year. Statewide, one-third of schools where teachers earned performance awards for gains in 2000 lost ground in 2001. Reading and math scores fell at other San Francisco schools that are comparable to Edison Charter in percentages of black and Hispanic students.

However, no other school is under the scrutiny that Edison Charter faces. The company promised progress. It has to deliver.

Diallo Dphrepaulezz studied the school's progress for the Pacific Research Institute and now serves on the charter's board. He doesn't know if the drop in scores reflects a statistical blip, a leveling-off once the easy progress is made, or the high anxiety that gripped the school in the spring of 2001. He does know that another bad year won't be tolerated.

Edison Charter's scores must start improving again in 2002, warns John Mockler, executive director of the State Board of Education, which is now the school's charter granter. "This year they probably deserve a pass because of all the stuff that was going on with the district," Mockler told the *Los Angeles Times*. "But if that happened two years or three years in a row, you'd have to say adios, and we will."

Reed Hastings, who chairs the state board, is dedicated to the expansion of charter schools—but only if they work. Hastings urges the speedy revocation of charters when a school isn't performing. Which, after all, is precisely the point.

—Joanne Jacobs

When 150 Edison Charter parents showed up at a May board meeting, an Edison opponent urged the board to ignore them. "Don't listen to them," the young activist said. "Half of them don't speak English."

His report, part of a Teacher's College at Columbia University study of Edison's schools, was laudatory: "Parents appear happy with the school's turnaround. After all, they must feel a sense of jubilation to have their children in a safe school rather than in a chaotic environment where real danger was ever present."

The transition was bumpy. Most of the teachers quit in the first two years, complaining of the longer hours, the scripted reading curriculum, the frequent meetings, and the pressure to show results.

Edison Inc. responded by replacing the unpopular Karvelis and offering a 10 percent raise. The current principal, Vince Matthews, is praised by parents, teachers, and even school board members. Teacher turnover is down sharply: 70 percent of teachers returned in the fall.

But while the school was finding its way, Wynns, a long-time opponent of the departed Rojas, was dismantling his pet projects. She got an anti-Edison majority on the board in November 2000, when Sanchez and Mar were elected.

As a former Thomas Edison teacher, Sanchez had told the *Chronicle* in early 1998—before the charter was proposed—that the school was "in a free fall." As a trustee, he told Edison Charter backers the board would revoke Edison's charter, and then go after the city's other charter schools, all run by nonprofits.

"No charter is good enough for this board," says Diallo Dphrepaulezz of the Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy, a free-market think tank in San Francisco, who wrote a study on "The Fight To Save Edison Charter." (Dphrepaulezz was so impressed by what he found that he joined the charter school's board.) Led by Wynns, Sanchez, and Mar, the board declared there'd been complaints about Edison Charter and ordered a district investigation. The preliminary report accused Edison Schools Inc. of various misdeeds, notably coercing teachers to approve the initial charter application, failing to provide financial documents, and ending bilingual education classes —instead of flouting the state's English immersion law like the rest of the district's schools.

Parents Don't Count

The school board tried to deny Edison any claim to success by redefining success. Sure, test scores are up, critics said. But scores are up in some other schools, too. Where? In selected grades and selected subjects. Besides, went the board's argument, Edison Charter has attracted new students from less dysfunctional families. The blacks with rising scores "aren't the same kids" who attended Thomas Edison, said Sanchez, who offered no proof that the school had found a cache of middle-class black families.

At one board meeting, Wynns claimed that a former Edison Charter consultant had described the charter as "two schools," one for African-Americans and another for Latinos, in the district's report. (The report also lists a parent's complaint that Latino students were allowed to take more ketchup packets than blacks in the lunch line.) But the consultant, Edee Allison, wasn't talking about Edison Charter Academy. She told the district's interviewer that Thomas Edison was "two schools" *before the charter*, with teachers and administrators more lax in disciplining Latino students. She actually credited Edison Charter with a "tremendous turn around" of an "out of control" school.

The most damaging allegation was that Edison Charter "counseled out" poor, black, and special education students, dumping them into other schools to improve its test scores.

But the district's case was weak. Edison Charter has a slightly lower percentage of poor students than Thomas Edison, as measured by eligibility for a free lunch. But poverty rates for students dropped in schools across the city in the late 1990s. During the dotcom boom, San Franciscans either got richer or were driven out of town by higher rents. Edison Charter educates the same number of black students, almost all bused in from the same area—Bayview-Hunter's Point—as in the pre-charter days. By contrast, black enrollment fell at nearby schools in the heavily Latino Mission District when a judge ended the city's desegregation plan in 1999. However, Edison Charter's percentage of blacks is lower than in pre-charter days because overall enrollment is up by 35 percent. Most of the new students are Latino kids from the neighborhood. (Whites account for 4.5 percent of students.)

As for special education students, the numbers are within the range set before the charter, and district investigators admitted that Edison Charter had followed district policy in telling students who couldn't handle "mainstreaming" that they'd have to transfer to another school for special classes. In any event, an actual decline in the number of such students would be a sign of success. Most special ed students are "learning disabled," which essentially means they can't read. Teach kids to read in first grade, and the special ed numbers will go down.

The board had demanded that Edison fix the problems it found. But it found few problems after the charter's first year, none in its third.

There's no question that Edison Charter is gaining students with engaged parents, the kind who make an active school choice. It's no longer a dumping ground for students whose parents didn't request a school. However, it's not just the new, less needy kids who are learning to read and calculate. Students who attended the school before the Edison takeover boosted their scores in the first two years. According to the Pacific Research report, Edison Charter was the third-fastest improving school out of 73 elementary schools in the city.

So when the school's charter was under attack, the old Thomas Edison parents and the newer Edison Charter parents came together to save their school. They organized, they petitioned, they created a web site to make their case. They showed up at board meetings in red T-shirts with kids waving homemade "Save Our School" signs. They were treated with contempt, parents say. Wynns read the newspaper while they spoke.

"They'll start an hour late," says Allegra Harrison, a single mother who has worked her way from low-income to moderate. "Our kids get restless waiting. Then they say, 'Can't you keep your kids quiet?' Jill Wynns told us she didn't have to talk to us. 'You're not district parents,'" she said.

Harrison said she doesn't care if Edison makes a profit. After her son's miserable experience at a neighborhood school, she wants a choice for her daughter. "I don't see who's getting exploited. I just see kids formerly stranded in the gutter finally getting a decent education."

When 150 Edison Charter parents showed up at a May board meeting, an Edison opponent urged the board to ignore them. "Don't listen to them," the young activist said. "Half of them don't speak English. They've been brainwashed by Edison." Sure enough, the board didn't listen.

But the media did listen. They could find dozens of parents eager to talk about how Edison Charter Academy had served their kids. No, they hadn't been bused to the meeting at corporate expense, as the opponents had claimed. They'd come on their own initiative to fight for their school.

Only one disgruntled parent—a woman whose child was suspended repeatedly for fighting classmates and staff—was available to pitch the "counseling out" story. Her child had left Edison Charter after the first year. Principal Matthews, a black male, also proved an effective antidote to stories that Edison Charter is hostile to black males. "I've been an advocate for disadvantaged students for 15 years," he said. "My goal is to educate students. This design does work."

The Charter Compromise

At a special board meeting on June 25, Edison Charter parents and children waited from 8 p.m., when the meeting was supposed to start, till 9:30, when it did. Finally, the public was allowed into the boardroom. The trustees sat at the far end of a huge circular desk, far from the clear plastic chairs set up for the public. Wynns announced the deal: Edison would be chartered by the state and would pay rent on the school building comparable to rent charged other charters; it would give up its students' share of the district's desegregation funds. Edison also would promise not to expand the school or to manage any other charter

Although its school-board critics thought they were mounting an attack on corporate interests, they instead found themselves battling parents.

in the city. Public testimony—the stated purpose of the meeting—would be limited to one minute per person, 10 minutes in all, said Wynns. Normally speakers get two minutes each, with 30 minutes set aside for testimony.

Edison Charter parents were angry. One woman stomped out after shouting that she'd left the hospital to come to the meeting. Wynns threatened to adjourn with no public comment. Adrienne Johnson used her 60 seconds to announce the formation of Parents to Revoke the School Board, vowing to work to unseat every trustee in the next five years.

An Edison critic tried to redirect the spin. "It was never against the parents," said Mary Harris of Parent Advocates for Youth, a Coleman offshoot. "It has never been about taking anything away from kids. It's against Edison corporation." In the plastic seats, the red-shirted parents buzzed in anger, because they knew better.

Under the deal, Edison will have to trim its academic program to cover the $350,000 annual rent on the building, and the loss of desegregation funding. "Changes will be minimal," says Gaynor McCown, the company's spokeswoman. The school almost certainly will lose money, with or without a rent to cover.

California's school funding doesn't cover Edison's longer year and enriched program. But Edison didn't lose its charter. "This was an important precedent for us," McCown says. Dphrepaulezz thinks Edison gave away too much. Negotiating away the school's share of desegregation funds is unconstitutional, he says. It's a federal civil rights remedy that belongs to the students, not to the district or to Edison. Beyond that, Edison could have won—eventually—if it had gone to court to defend its charter. "Personally I think Edison should have called the school board's bluff," says Dphrepaulezz. "Now any board can launch an arbitrary attack and monkey wrench you back to the table."

An independent charter, without corporate funding behind it, couldn't have survived the school board's relentless attack. But a for-profit corporation can't survive forever without actually making a profit. Edison's plan says it will break even by 2004. To meet that goal, will it compromise on quality—say, by cutting instruction time and teacher pay? Or will Edison become a nonprofit, with donors making it possible to offer high-quality, full-day, 10-month-a-year instruction to needy students?

In the world of education, accountability is a new and often malleable idea. Financial accountability is well understood and enforced. It could prove a much tougher foe for Edison than the San Francisco Unified School Board. ◻

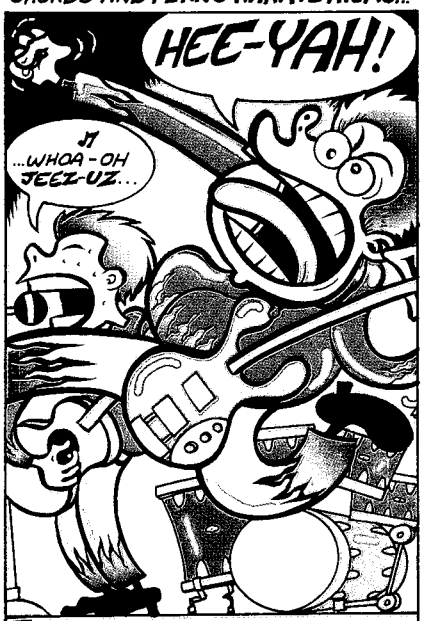
Joanne Jacobs (joanne@readjacobs.com), a former columnist for the San Jose Mercury News, is a media fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford and the founder of www.readjacobs.com. She is writing a book on Downtown College Prep, a charter high school in San Jose.

A SECULAR HUMANIST LOOKS INSIDE THE WORLD OF...

CHRISTIAN ROCK

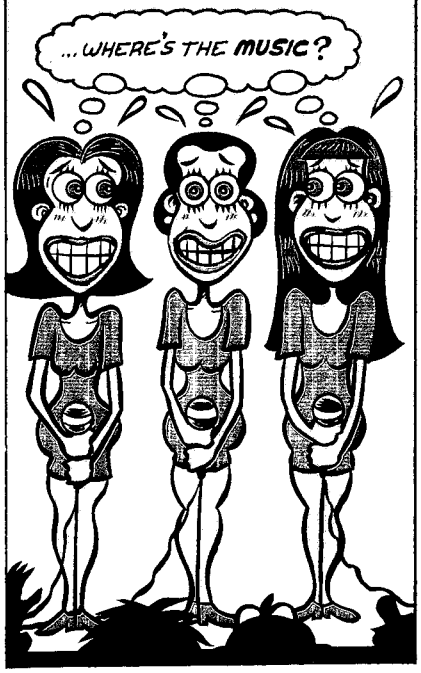
♫ ...WHAT IF GOD WAS ONE OF US...
...JUST A SLOB LIKE ONE OF US... ♫
DON'T FORGET TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO OUR MINISTRY...
YOU'LL FIND A HANDY ORDER FORM ON THE BACK OF EACH SEAT...
..SIGH... THERE'S NOTHING PRETTIER OR SHINIER THAN A BRAND NEW CHRISTIAN!
BY PETER BAGGE (PETERBAGGE@EARTHLINK.NET) '01
UGH! THIS "SLOB" WOULD RATHER BE AT AN EMINEM CONCERT RIGHT NOW!

SO THERE I WAS, AT A **CHRISTIAN YOUTH TALENT CONTEST,** WATCHING A PORTLY 3-PIECE SIBLING ROCK COMBO PRAISE THE LORD BETWEEN POWER CHORDS AND **FLYING KARATE KICKS...**



JUDGING FROM THE **SHOWBIZ PANTS** AND **N'SYNCED HAIR** THEIR MA FASHIONED FOR THEM, FAITH ALONE CAN'T BE THE SOLE REASON THEY'RE HAMMING IT UP ON STAGE. THIS **IS** HOW **HANSON** GOT **THEIR** START, AFTER ALL!

NEXT UP WERE THREE TEENAGED LATINAS—THE NEXT **DESTINY'S CHILD,** PERHAPS?— NERVOUSLY WAITING TO PERFORM **THEIR** SONG+DANCE, ONLY:



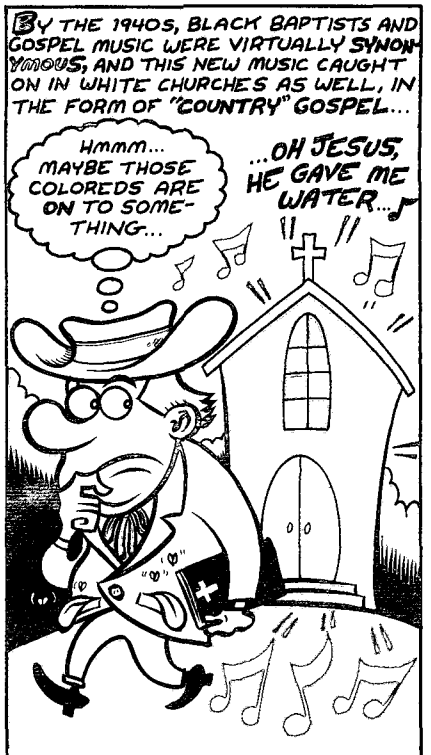
AGES SEEMED TO PASS WHILE THE SOUNDMAN FUSSED WITH THEIR PRE-RECORDED BACKING TAPE—WITH **30 MORE ACTS** STILL WAITING IN THE WINGS!

I WAS READY TO **STRANGLE** THE SOUNDMAN BY THEN, BUT NO ONE ELSE SHOWED THE EVEN **SLIGHTEST** SIGN OF IMPATIENCE! IS THIS THE "**CHRISTIAN**" THING TO DO?, I WONDERED. IS THIS WHAT **JESUS** WOULD DO?

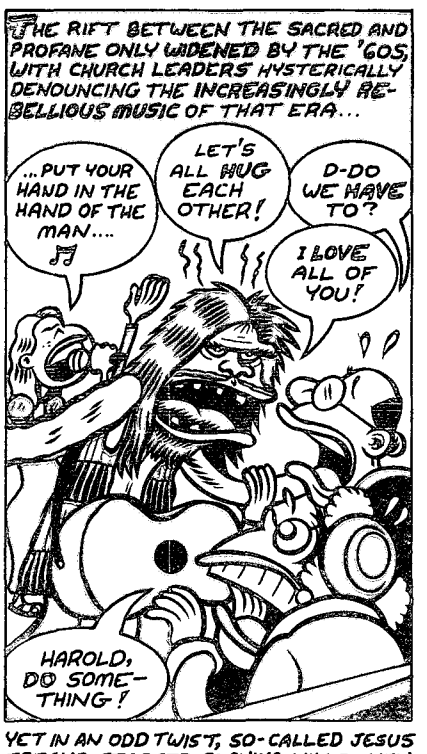
I CAN'T SPEAK FOR JESUS, BUT ALL I COULD THINK OF WAS HOW I **COULD** BE HOME PLAYING **NINTENDO,** SO THAT'S WHAT I DID...I MAY HAVE MISSED **THE NEXT WHITNEY HOUSTON** BY DOING SO, BUT OH WELL. PRAISE NINTENDO!

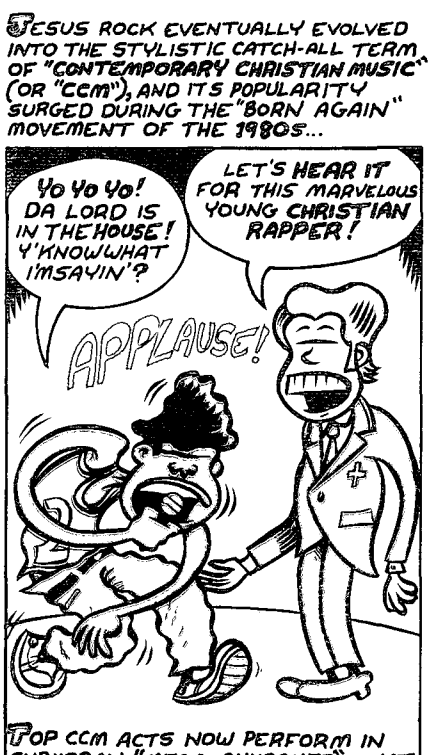
MUSIC HAS BEEN A BATTLEGROUND BETWEEN RELIGION AND THE MASSES SINCE DAY ONE, WITH THE FORMER CONSTANTLY CHANGING ITS STANCE ON WHAT THE LATTER CAN OR CAN'T LISTEN TO...
HALF OF OUR PARISHIONERS ARE DYING FROM THE PLAGUE...
HOW CAN YOU WORRY ABOUT SUCH TRIFLES WHEN THERE ARE POINTY-TOED FLUTISTS AMONG US?!?
DURING THE BLACK PLAGUE, ONE OF THE CHURCH'S MAIN CONCERNS WAS THE EFFECT THAT FLUTES (ALONG WITH THE FASHION CRAZE FOR POINTY-TOED SHOES) WAS HAVING ON YOUNG PEOPLE!

UNTIL THE 1920S, THE ONLY MUSIC ALLOWED EVEN IN SOUTHERN BLACK CHURCHES WERE TRADITIONAL HYMNS, UNTIL A STRUGGLING SONGWRITER NAMED THOMAS DORSEY HIT UPON THE IDEA OF ADDING BIBLICALLY INSPIRED LYRICS TO CONTEMPORARY JAZZ AND BLUES STANDARDS...
THE IDEA IS TO USE THE MUSIC THAT KIDS ARE LISTENING TO ANYWAY TO PREACH THE WORD TO 'EM!
THERE'LL BE NO DEVIL MUSIC IN MY CHURCH!
DORSEY'S NEWLY-COINED "GOSPEL" MUSIC MET WITH MUCH RESISTANCE AT FIRST, UNTIL THE DEPRESSION AND DWINDLING CONGREGATIONS CAUSED DESPERATE PASTORS TO RECONSIDER.


BY THE 1940S, BLACK BAPTISTS AND GOSPEL MUSIC WERE VIRTUALLY SYNONYMOUS, AND THIS NEW MUSIC CAUGHT ON IN WHITE CHURCHES AS WELL, IN THE FORM OF "COUNTRY" GOSPEL...
HMMM... MAYBE THOSE COLOREDS ARE ON TO SOMETHING...
...OH JESUS, HE GAVE ME WATER...♪
AN ENTIRE INDUSTRY EVOLVED AROUND THIS POPULAR NEW "CHURCH" MUSIC, WITH PERFORMERS TOURING THE "GOSPEL CIRCUIT," AND RECORDING FOR FLEDGLING CHRISTIAN RECORD LABELS.

BY THE '50S, GOSPEL STARS LIKE SAM COOKE CAVED INTO TEMPTATION AND "CROSSED OVER" TO THE POTENTIALLY MORE LUCRATIVE POP MARKET. SUCH DEFECTIONS WERE LOUDLY CONDEMNED BY THE INCREASINGLY SANCTIMONIOUS GOSPEL MUSIC WORLD...
BUT, I STILL WANT TO SING IN CHURCH—
YOU'VE MADE YOUR CHOICE, SON...
AWW, LET HIM SING, PA—
YOU KEEP OUT OF THIS!
THEY ALSO DEEMED IT SACRILEGE WHEN SINGERS LIKE RAY CHARLES ADDED "SECULAR" LYRICS TO "GOSPEL" RHYTHMS AND MELODIES, CONVENIENTLY FORGETTING THAT GOSPEL ITSELF WAS ROOTED IN SUCH BORROWING.


THE RIFT BETWEEN THE SACRED AND PROFANE ONLY WIDENED BY THE '60S, WITH CHURCH LEADERS HYSTERICALLY DENOUNCING THE INCREASINGLY REBELLIOUS MUSIC OF THAT ERA...
...PUT YOUR HAND IN THE HAND OF THE MAN....♪
LET'S ALL HUG EACH OTHER!
D-DO WE HAVE TO?
I LOVE ALL OF YOU!
HAROLD, DO SOMETHING!
YET IN AN ODD TWIST, SO-CALLED JESUS FREAKS STARTED PLAYING WHAT THEY CALLED JESUS ROCK, AND BY THE '70S WERE PERFORMING FOLK SERVICES TO VERY MIXED REACTIONS FROM THE MORE CONSERVATIVE CONGREGATIONS.


JESUS ROCK EVENTUALLY EVOLVED INTO THE STYLISTIC CATCH-ALL TERM OF "CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MUSIC" (OR "CCM"), AND ITS POPULARITY SURGED DURING THE "BORN AGAIN" MOVEMENT OF THE 1980S...
YO YO YO! DA LORD IS IN THE HOUSE! Y'KNOW WHAT I'MSAYIN'?
LET'S HEAR IT FOR THIS MARVELOUS YOUNG CHRISTIAN RAPPER!
APPLAUSE!
TOP CCM ACTS NOW PERFORM IN SUBURBAN "MEGA-CHURCHES" THAT SEAT THOUSANDS, YET JUST LIKE IN THE 1930S THIS CHRISTIANIZATION OF CONTEMPORARY POP MUSIC IS DESIGNED TO KEEP YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE FOLD.

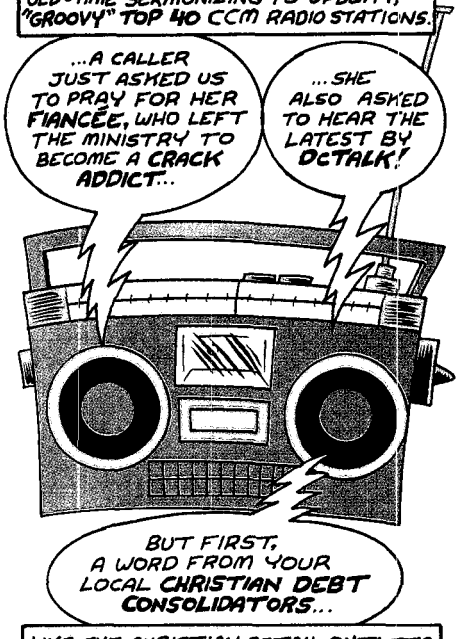
CCM IS JUST ONE PART OF AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING **PARALLEL UNIVERSE** THAT OFFERS A "CHRISTIAN" VERSION OF A HUGE VARIETY OF CONSUMER PRODUCTS...

AT FIRST GLANCE, THESE PRODUCTS LOOK **INDISTINGUISHABLE** FROM THEIR MAINSTREAM CONTERPARTS, BUT CLOSER INSPECTION REVEALS THAT THEY'VE ALL BEEN **GOD-IFIED**, OR MADE "CONSISTENT WITH THE **CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE**."

OPINIONS VARY GREATLY ABOUT THIS COMMERCIALIZATION OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY. HOWEVER—ESPECIALLY AMONG **CHRISTIAN MUSICIANS THEMSELVES**...

MY FAITH AND MY MUSIC ARE **SEPARATE ENTITIES**...
MY FAITH **INSPIRES** MY MUSIC, BUT I DON'T USE IT TO **PREACH**...
IT'S MY **DUTY** TO SPREAD THE WORD! MY MUSIC **IS** MY MINISTRY!
ROCK 'N' ROLL IS **STILL** THE DEVIL'S MUSIC!

THIS DIVERSITY OF OPINION IS REFLECTED IN THE VARIETY OF **CHRISTIAN RADIO FORMATS**, WHICH RANGE FROM FIERY OLD-TIME SERMONIZING TO UPBEAT, "GROOVY" **TOP 40** CCM RADIO STATIONS.


...A CALLER JUST ASKED US TO PRAY FOR HER **FIANCÉE**, WHO LEFT THE MINISTRY TO BECOME A **CRACK ADDICT**...
...SHE ALSO ASKED TO HEAR THE LATEST BY **DCTALK**!
BUT FIRST, A WORD FROM YOUR LOCAL **CHRISTIAN DEBT CONSOLIDATORS**...

LIKE THE CHRISTIAN RETAIL OUTLETS, THESE STATIONS SOUND LIKE ANY **OTHER** CHIRPY TOP 40 STATION—THOUGH NOT ONLY HAS EVERY SONG BEEN **CHRISTIANIZED**, BUT SO HAVE THE **SPONSORS**. "CHRISTIAN" HERBAL VIAGRA?!?

THESE STATIONS ALSO PROMOTE LOCAL CCM CONCERTS, SO OUT OF CURIOSITY I DECIDED TO ATTEND A PERFORMANCE BY A FLAMBOYANT—AND PARTICULARLY **OLD-SCHOOL**— SINGER NAMED **CARMAN**.

CARMAN'S FANS MAINLY CONSISTED OF **YOUNG BLUE-COLLAR FAMILIES**, AND LIKE THE AUDIENCE AT THE TALENT SHOW I SAW THEY ALL EXHIBITED THAT... WELL, **ZEN-LIKE PATIENCE** AS THEY WAITED ON LINE—INCLUDING THE **CHILDREN**, WHO WERE SO WELL-BEHAVED THEY SEEMED **HYPNOTIZED**!

OPENING FOR CARMAN WERE THE **ZOEGIRLS**—A SORT OF A "CHRISTIAN **SPICE GIRLS**," IF YOU CAN IMAGINE SUCH A THING—ONLY THEY HAD **NO BACK-UP BAND**, AND WOULD LECTURE THE ADOLESCENTS IN THE AUDIENCE TO **ABSTAIN FROM SEX** BETWEEN LIP-SYNCED RENDITIONS OF THEIR SONGS.

THE **MOMS** WERE MUCH MORE INTO THE ZOEGIRLS THAN THEIR **DAUGHTERS** WERE. THE ZOES ARE THE MUSICAL EQUIVALENT OF **BROCCOLI**, IT SEEMS. THEIR SHOW DIDN'T FEEL LIKE "ENTERTAINMENT" AT ALL. IT FELT MORE LIKE **CHURCH**!

CARMAN'S SHOW, ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS VERY **GLITZY** AND **VEGAS-LIKE**. HE PERFORMED SONGS IN EVERY MUSICAL GENRE IMAGINABLE; THE ONLY CONSTANT BEING THAT EACH ONE OF THEM WAZ ALL ABOUT **JEEEEEEEEEZUZZ!**

DON'T FORGET TO SEE MY NEW MOVIE, "**HEART OF A CHAMPION**"..
...THE **PROFITS** OF WHICH WILL BE "SOWN" BACK INTO MY **MINISTRY**...
AND **NOW** I'M GONNA SHOW YOU HOW I **BEAT UP THE DEVIL**!

CARMAN'S ELMER GANTRY ROUTINE WAS SO **OVER-THE-TOP** THAT I DIDN'T KNOW WHETHER TO **LAUGH** OR **FLEE IN TERROR**—THOUGH ONCE I SAW THE LINES FORMING OF THE **SICK** AND THE **MAIMED** WAITING TO BE "SAVED" BY THIS HUCKSTER, I OPTED FOR THE **LATTER**.

I LATER ATTENDED AN "ALTERNATIVE" CHRISTIAN ROCK SHOW, WHERE SUCH OLD-SCHOOL PREACHING AND COLLECTION PLATE PASSING ARE FROWNED UPON, AS ARE THE RELENTLESS REFERENCES TO JESUS...

THIS SONG IS ABOUT THE... EXISTENTIAL ENNUI I FELT WHILE, UH, CONTEMPLATING THE GREAT BEYOND 'N' STUFF..
THAT IS, UNTIL I FOUND PEACE OF MIND THROUGH... WELL, YOU KNOW WHO...

THEIR LYRICS STILL HAVE TO PASS A SELF-IMPOSED SCRIPTURAL LITMUS TEST, HOWEVER, SO THE USUAL TEEN THEMES OF PARTYING AND ROMANCE ARE AVOIDED AS WELL— RESULTING IN A LOT OF LYRICALLY VAGUE SONGS THAT DON'T SEEM TO BE ABOUT ANYTHING!

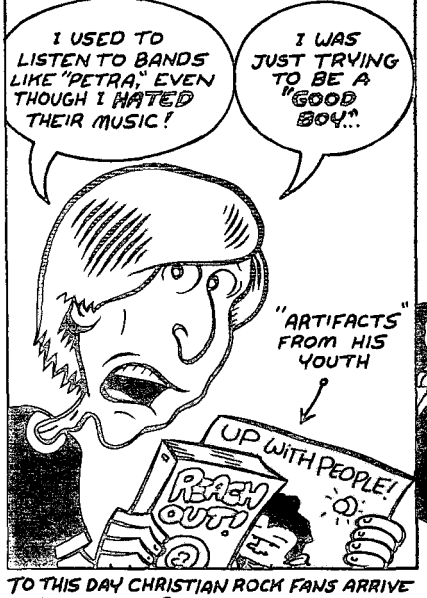
AS WITH THE PREVIOUS SHOWS, MANY PARENTS WERE IN ATTENDANCE, EXPOSING THEIR KIDS TO MUSIC THAT'S "GOOD FOR THEM". AND AS ALWAYS, EVERYONE WAS INCREDIBLY PATIENT AND WELL-BEHAVED...

NONE OF THE PENT-UP TEEN FRUSTRATION THAT ROCK USUALLY SERVES AS AN OUTLET FOR IS EVIDENT IN CHRISTIAN ROCK OR ITS FANS. IN THAT SENSE, THIS MUSIC OFTEN FEELS RATHER SHALLOW AND, WELL, SOULLESS. IT DOESN'T REALLY FEEL LIKE "ROCK" AT ALL, TO BE HONEST.

OF COURSE, THE CHRISTIAN MUSIC "SCENE" DOES OFFER A HEALTHY ALTERNATIVE TO OTHER SEX-AND-DRUG-FUELED SCENES, AND THE LAID-BACK, INDIVIDUALISTIC APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY THESE ALTERNA-TYPES EXHIBIT MUST HAVE A TREMENDOUS APPEAL TO A LOT OF "SPIRITUALLY SEARCHING" TEENAGERS...

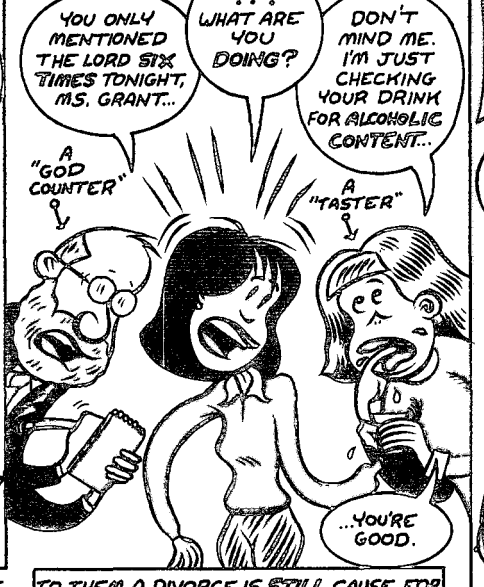
YET IN SPITE OF THESE ALTERNA-CHRISTIANS' MORE ENLIGHTENED DEMEANOR, MANY OF THEM STILL ADHERE TO THE SAME RIGID, FUNDAMENTALIST BELIEFS THAT THEIR MORE TRADITIONAL COUNTERPARTS PREACH.

A MUSICIAN FRIEND OF MINE WHO GREW UP IN A FUNDAMENTALIST HOUSEHOLD TOLD ME THAT HE MADE A DELIBERATE EFFORT TO "GET INTO" CHRISTIAN ROCK IN A VAIN ATTEMPT TO RECONCILE HIS LOVE OF ROCK MUSIC WITH HIS PARENTS' FAITH...


I USED TO LISTEN TO BANDS LIKE "PETRA," EVEN THOUGH I HATED THEIR MUSIC!
I WAS JUST TRYING TO BE A "GOOD BOY"...
"ARTIFACTS" FROM HIS YOUTH
REACH OUT!
UP WITH PEOPLE!

TO THIS DAY CHRISTIAN ROCK FANS ARRIVE AT CONCERTS BY BUS IN THE COMPANY OF THE YOUTH FELLOWSHIP GROUPS THAT ARE ORGANIZED BY THEIR PARENTS AND MINISTERS. SO MUCH FOR ROCK BEING "ANTI-AUTHORITARIAN" MUSIC!

ANOTHER ODD TWIST IS HOW CCM STARS ARE PUT UNDER ENORMOUS PRESSURE BY THEIR OWN FANS TO SERVE AS ROLE-MODELS BY LIVING AN EXEMPLARY CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE...


YOU ONLY MENTIONED THE LORD SIX TIMES TONIGHT, MS. GRANT...
?!? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
DON'T MIND ME. I'M JUST CHECKING YOUR DRINK FOR ALCOHOLIC CONTENT...
A "GOD COUNTER"
A "TASTER"
...YOU'RE GOOD.

TO THEM, A DIVORCE IS STILL CAUSE FOR SCANDAL, AND ANY ATTEMPT AT MAINSTREAM SUCCESS STILL WILL ELICIT HOWLS OF PROTEST FROM THEIR POSSESIVE FOLLOWING. EVEN MADONNA HAS NEVER HAD TO ENDURE SUCH PUBLIC SCRUTINY!

STILL, WHEN IT COMES TO SANCTIMONY, CHRISTIAN ROCKERS AND THEIR FANS ARE NO WORSE THAN THEIR MAINSTREAM COUNTERPARTS. IT'S PROBABLY JUST ONE MORE THING THEY SWIPED FROM POP MUSIC!

A CONCERT FOR A FREE TIBET
... LET US NOW HAVE A MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR ALL THE TRANSGENDERED PEOPLE OF COLOR WHO PERISHED IN THE PENTAGON ON SEPT. 11th...
END

Teen-Demon Tracts

Why baby-boomer parents fear their children.

Chris Lehmann

The Myth of Maturity: What Teenagers Need From Parents to Become Adults, by Terri Apter, New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 288 pages, $24.95

Parents Under Siege: Why You Are the Solution, Not the Problem, in Your Child's Life, by James Garbarino and Claire Bedard, New York: Free Press, 240 pages, $24

KIDS THESE DAYS. We all know the basic jeremiad: They're media-addled, affectless, nihilist, subliterate, a *Clockwork Orange*-style army of "superpredators," teen gunmen, and garden-variety sociopaths waiting to happen. Advertising has hypnotized them. Video games have conditioned them to kill without feeling. And pop culture has hammered every conceivable kind of coarseness—from anonymous sex to Satanism, from glorified violence to Internet passivity—into their poignantly echoing little craniums. Is it any wonder that most of them are but a bully's slight or a chatroom flame away from raining hot-lead vengeance on schoolrooms or playgrounds?

Well, yes, actually. It is, indeed, a considerable wonder that any part of this hysterical caricature should command serious discussion in the first place. As almost no media outlet is going to tell you, kids these days are astonishingly well-adjusted, nonviolent, educated, and polite. Nearly all the leading indicators of social ills among American adolescents—drug use, violent assault, teen pregnancy, drop-out rates, you name it—have been declining for at least 10 years now. More teens are graduating high school and attending college than ever before. A record number of American teens volunteer their time to charitable causes—twice as many as their counterparts of 20 years past. Math SATs are at a 30-year high. Hell, even teen literacy is increasing: A recent survey conducted by the National Education Association found that 41 percent of teen respondents said they read 15 books or more a year. How many adults can claim a comparable intake?

Meanwhile, social scientist Mike Males of the Justice Policy Institute—one of the only honest inquirers into the condition of American adolescents—has cataloged the remarkable degree and scope of the recent turnaround in teen conduct. (His most recent research is available online at alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=10904.)

In 1999 the number of homicides committed by teens was down 62 percent from what it had been in 1990. Over the same period, rapes in which adolescents were charged declined 27 percent, teen-perpetrated violent crime generally was down 22 percent, the incidence of sexually transmitted disease decreased 50 percent, births were down 17 percent, abortions were down 15 percent, and drunken driving offenses plummeted 35 percent.

The only behaviors registering upticks over the same period—smoking (up 13 percent based on average monthly intake) and drug fatalities (up 11 percent)—have been the targets of the most aggressive adult-sponsored "zero-tolerance" interventions, a development that Males soundly suggests is no coincidence.

Nevertheless, the dominant discourse on teen affairs is one of never-ending crisis—a sort of campfire parade of ghoulish shadowplay projected onto adolescence. Indeed, despite all the good news about American kids, a sprawling array of books, videotapes, and consulting seminars would have us believe that just the opposite is true. So would opportunistic politicians, from Bill Bennett, who specializes in Spenglerian prophecies of doom, to Joe Lieberman and Hillary Clinton, who trade in saucer-eyed paternalism. Whatever its source, the message is the same: Kids are out of control, beyond the reach of adult authority, losing all purchase on civilized behavior. And of course, always, always getting worse.

There's a simple force behind the fuss here: raging boomer narcissism. The alleged anguish adult Americans feel over the imperilment of our young is not really about young Americans at all. It is, rather, about the chronic inability of the boomer generation to own up to its own lack of moral authority, its steadily eroding cultural influence—indeed, the basic fact of its own mortality. This impulse courses through our popular culture at virtually every turn, from the boomers' odd, reverse-Oedipal reverence for the "greatest generation" (i.e., the very buttoned-down squares against whom the boomers launched their own storied youthful rebellion) to the embarrassingly sclerotic condition of our rock eminences, as chronicled in John Strausbaugh's recent *Rock 'Til You Drop*.

Nowhere can you apprehend this unlovely dynamic more plainly than in the wildly profitable cottage industry of parental advice literature. Anxiety over child-rearing is, of course, a perennial source of tension within any culture. It's the cultural reckoning that psychologist Erik Erikson, in a typically inelegant formulation,

termed "generativity," by which he meant the imperative of instructing the next generation in the pursuit of useful lives. (The opposite of generativity, in Erikson's developmental scheme, is "stagnation," i.e., morbid self-absorption, a term that applies with equal force to boomer parenting practices and musical tastes.)

Even a cursory glance over this self-enabling landscape registers how oddly incidental actual childhood experience proves to be in the new parenting. Two new manuals purport to engage different aspects of adolescence, but nevertheless remain mired in the same warm, sticky, and unmovable center of boomer self-adulation. In Terri Apter's *The Myth of Maturity*, the very definition of adolescence is pressed into the service of this all-consuming mandate. Apter, a Cambridge social psychologist, seeks to persuade us that the tragedy of our age is that young adults are in deep denial about their incorrigible arrestedness. Amid the many trials of their maiden adulthood, she avers, they feel perversely compelled to refute the proper sovereignty of boomer parents in their lives.

Apter makes a half-hearted attempt to illustrate some decline in the condition of young adults, but she falls woefully short of the mark. She absurdly contrasts contemporary rates of eating disorders, drug use, and alcoholism among 18- to-24-year-olds to rates reported in 1940, when neither these domains of public health research nor the general culture of therapy were anywhere near as developed as they are today. Hard-pressed to verify allegedly alarming suicide rates, Apter resorts to a still sneakier bit of legerdemain: She grimly announces that the number of young adult suicides has risen four-fold over the past 20 years—but upon consulting the pertinent footnote, we learn that the data for this claim comes from a parliamentary report in Apter's native England, and hence has little discernible bearing on the largely American research group from which she draws her anecdotal tales of woe.

That research group, too, is a work of staggering, if deftly packaged, self-involvement. The core of Apter's research is culled from a set of interviews she conducted with 32 young people—who came, another footnote informs us, from an "opportunity sample" made up "from the younger brothers and sisters who participated in my 1990 study *Altered Loves*...and the daughters and sons of women who participated in my study of midlife women." It may take a village to raise a child, but it evidently takes but 32 subjects left over from earlier projects to define a generation.

The bulk of Apter's book marshals together interviews, alternating between the testimony of this score-and-a-half of anguished "thresholders" (if you haven't gathered this already, Apter is a master of euphemistic coinages) and their tragically conflicted parents, who are seeking to express their soulful, encompassing concern, but are unsure whether their fumbling offspring are ready to feel the love. Much of the book reads like a transcript from some woozy, cross-generational segment of MTV's *The Real World*. As with that mother of all reality shows, *The Myth of Maturity* can be voyeuristically diverting, until you're suddenly pulled up short by some fresh bid to further infantalize the hapless struggling young adult in question—the sociological equivalent of seeing the new housemate from Brigham Young University puking in the kitchen sink. "New research shows that the brain itself often keeps its adolescent characteristics until the age of twenty-six," Apter announces at one point with near-palpable glee. She then assures her smartly turned-out army of invading parents, "This means that some young people are not prepared, physiologically, to take on adult responsibilities, involving self-control and self-management."

Uneasy Rider
The cultural contradictions of Charlie Daniels

Jesse Walker

When Country Music Television held a benefit for the victims of the September 11 attacks, one performer who'd been invited didn't appear.

Charlie Daniels had hoped to play a new song at the October concert, but organizers worried that its opening lines might offend Arabs: "This ain't no rag, it's a flag/And we don't wear it on our heads." Daniels gamely tried to defend the lyric, claiming at one point that it was aimed at Osama bin Laden alone, not all Arabs ("If Osama wore a cowboy hat, I'd write about a cowboy hat"), and at another point that he was merely expressing his disapproval of American-flag bandanas. On one matter, though, he stuck to his guns: If he couldn't play the song at the benefit, he wasn't going to appear there at all. And so he didn't.

Daniels had come a long way since 1973, when his first hit, "Uneasy Rider," told the tale of a hippie whose car breaks down in Mississippi. The hero nearly gets into a fight with "some fella with green teeth" and his right-wing redneck buddies, then outwits them. But for all the song's hick-baiting, the singer couldn't conceal his Southern drawl: A North Carolina native who's spent most of his professional career in Tennessee, Daniels' long hair»

This, it turns out, is the common trajectory of contemporary kid-baiting: Take an extreme outbreak of pathology (e.g., the infamous 1999 massacre at Columbine High School) or a speculative, ambiguous factoid (as in this neurology aside, which fails to specify either what the brain's "adolescent characteristics" may be or how, if at all, such physiology translates into actual behavior), and generalize wildly. One can all but picture Apter placing an outsized bib, or a prototype of an adult-scale kiddy leash, into the grateful hands of her ill-understood, filially deprived readers, with a rousing "Go get 'em!" for good measure.

More often, though, Apter proceeds by the more familiar, if no less insidious, logic of obsessive self-reference. Gently part the veils of most young adult malaise—be it career or money trouble, marital-cum-relationship strife, depression, or suicidal feelings—and there, majestically, is the calm deliverance of parental love, a magically intact All Powerful Oz. Even hostility or resentment explicitly directed at one's parents is really a masked plea for more nurturance: "Parents often respond to constant criticism of what they do and what they say as a form of rejection," she counsels. "But young people want to feel their parents' involvement. Quarrels are a way of soliciting a parent's help in being centred. They involve a plea for acknowledgment of feelings....It would be an enormous help to look on these quarrels in a new light, to take new pride in their battles, to feel more positive about the contributions they are making to a young person's development."

This prodigious cognitive bait-and-switch—whereby statements of dissent and criticism become cry-for-help speech-acts signifying the diametrically opposite point—contrasts sharply with Apter's de rigueur tour of pop culture, that shape-shifting, omnipotent, seductive force that reduces young brains to bare functionalist rubble. Plunge these complex, parent-longing souls into the giddy ferment of celebrity culture and they suddenly become quite distressingly uncomplicated. "The lives younger people compare theirs to are not the lives of people they sit next to in church, on the train, in the office," Apter writes, donning the well-worn hairshirt of the moral scold, "but rather those that they read about or watch on television....Awareness of these distant and idealized figures sets up comparisons that leave [some young people] feeling unimportant and left out of the first rank of human beings."

Got that? Young adults transmit secret messages of desperately longed-for submission beneath their consciously expressed frustrations and resentments, but can't be counted on to grok that media celebrities are not, you know, real. It's actually this very sort of psychic profile—a weak, decentered self, sporadically awash in the superluminary thrills of mass spectacle—that forms the nexus of what that arch-disciplinarian Theodor Adorno termed the authoritarian personality. Lest you think this a rhetorical exaggeration, consider the curious cult of parental personality that Apter urges on the confused young adult: "Thresholders often have an epiphany about a parent that forever changes their perspective. Suddenly the complaints and recriminations that formed the repertoire of teenage conversation ('She always wanted me to be something I'm not' or 'She never listened when I said what I wanted') dissolve into thin air, and a young adult is left staring at the simple, dazzling love a parent has always had." The tableau furnished by this life-transforming "epiphany" is discomfittingly close to that experienced by a raw

Party recruit before the towering authority of a Great Leader; we should remember, in the face of such self-flattering cant, that the final horror of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was that Winston Smith loved Big Brother.

Actual maturity, on the other hand, proceeds along the bumpier, conflict-ridden path of testing such authority—even when doing so incurs new psychic costs, financial hardships, or blows to one's cherished self-esteem. These are the rather unexceptional trials awaiting any inchoate self making the acquaintance of a basically indifferent world; one of the first, unforgettable lessons of maturity is that, far from redounding to your own needful child-self or your parents' "simple, dazzling love," the cosmic order of things proceeds with little concern for your well-being. Only a generation as terminally solipsistic as Apter's could cast itself as saviors in this situation—or deride both the idea of maturity and the notion of the spoiled child as a "myth." The not-so-hidden message beneath these pronouncements is just as troubling as Apter's calmly polemic vision of arrested development as the norm, nay the desideratum, of young adult experience: a transparently hysterical rejection of the maturity of the boomers' children as an augur of the boomers' mortality or (worse, from their perspective) their own historical obsolescence.

Yet for truly rudderless, kitchen-sink hysteria, drunk on its own unassailable righteousness, it's hard to beat James Garbarino and Claire Bedard's *Parents Under Siege: Why You Are the Solution, Not the Problem, in Your Child's Life*. Garbarino and Bedard, proprietors of Cornell University's Family Life Development Center and partners in what can only be one of the most jittery and suggestible marriages on the planet, dutifully hit most of the key points of dial-a-scare bombast that fuel the long-running culture war on American kids: the glib treatment of pathology as the governing model of youthful behavior; the lurid demonization of all pop culture, video games, and the Internet (or, in the authors' preferred shorthand for all of the above, "the dark side"); the purely anecdotal tales of teen misconduct (lacking even the notional honesty of a researcher like Apter, they don't even appear to have spoken with any actual teens here); and of course the steadfast conviction, conveyed in their subtitle, that parents, in their grandiose moral serenity, possess in their very persons the stirringly simple solution to all this fictively skyrocketing pathology and anarchy.

Like every other contemporary teen-demon tract, *Parents Under Siege* is empirically challenged. Garbarino and Bedard's laundry list of phony behavioral epidemics is even more cursory than Apter's: "The 1990s threatened the American Dream of Parenting as never before," they announce in typically grammatical unrestraint. "The problems surrounding our children and youth became increasingly more serious: rising suicide rates, drug abuse, explosive youth crime and increasing rates of depression." None of these charges is specified to any age group or region or income level. None of it is sourced, for the simple reason that, as Mike Males has tirelessly demonstrated, none of it is true.

Indeed, quite tellingly, Garbarino and Bedard's only mild concession to evidence is a citation of a 1999 *USA Today* poll of American parents. The authors report in all due shock that a resounding 90 percent of this poll sample, when asked whether raising kids to be "good people" was more difficult now than it was 20 years earlier, replied *yes*. Never mind, of course, that 20 years past the respondents themselves were either in their teens or recently departed from them, and that the effective brunt of this particular question was, "Were you successfully raised as a couldn't cover up his red neck, to borrow a phrase from David Allan Coe.

Fortunately, it was the era of Willie Nelson and Lynyrd Skynyrd, of outlaw country and Southern rock. With 1974's "Long Haired Country Boy," Daniels embraced his cultural contradictions: "People say I'm no good, crazy as a loon/'Cause I get stoned in the morning, I get drunk in the afternoon.../I ain't askin' nobody for nothing, if I can't get it on my own/If you don't like the way I'm livin', just leave this longhaired country boy alone." Suddenly, the hippie ethic didn't seem that far removed from backwoods libertarianism.

The longhaired country boy may be anti-authoritarian, but he's also patriotic. In 1980, four years after campaigning for Jimmy Carter, Daniels had another hit with the hard-rocking "In America." A sample lyric: "We may have done a little bit of fighting amongst ourselves/But you outside people best leave us alone/'Cause we'll all stick together, and you can take that to the bank/That's the cowboys and the hippies, and the rebels and the yanks." The sentiment isn't very different from that of a country boy, longhaired or otherwise, telling a trespasser to get the hell off his yard. But the target is a bit more diffuse. The song may be a response to the Iranian hostage crisis, but the only foreigners to be cited by name are the Russians, who had just launched »

good person?" The faint whiff of hysteria has been serviceably raised, so we're off and running.

Why fuss over numbers, in any event, when Garbarino and Bedard can speak with utmost authority on the most solemn phrase in the whole kid-baiting catechism: "post-Littleton"? As they rather breathlessly inform their readers, Garbarino published his last jaunt through the adolescent "dark side," *Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them,* on April 20, 1999, the day of the Littleton massacre. Eventually, the family of Littleton shooter Dylan Klebold came to them for assistance; for these boomer parents, this is equivalent to having been at Woodstock, and the authors are certainly not above milking it for all it's worth. *Parents Under Siege* is, indeed, dedicated to "Tom, Sue, and Byron Klebold and....all the families who have lost children." The book's preface opens by announcing, in an outburst of weirdly pornographic nonsense worthy of Alfred Jarry, "On April 20, 1999, the world of American parenting changed forever....That day, as never before, parents learned that their kids could begin their day normally, as just kids going off on the bus, but end it shattered—physically or psychologically—or dead."

The authors demonstrate a taste for the lurid and the shocking that rivals that of any trenchcoated, Goth-addled teen.

There's something more than a little shameless in such flourishes. Indeed, the authors demonstrate a taste for the lurid and the shocking that rivals that of any trenchcoated, Goth-addled teen. They recount in extended detail, on two separate occasions, a horrifying episode in which a 7-year-old Chicago child was gunned down by a gangster as he left his parents' supervision and walked the 75 feet to his school doorway, where his teachers were waiting to escort him. (Never mind that the episode occurred in 1992, or that their context-free account, in any time frame, tells us precisely nothing about the state of present-day parenting or teens: It's a frightening story, and will command the rapt attention of anxious parents.)

They also reprint an entire extended e-mail report, running five pages in *Parents Under Siege,* from a mother whose middle-school child was being stalked by a classmate who kept an obsessive log of his activities and reportedly maintained a Web site called "Ten Ways to Kill Tyrone M." They also see fit to make repeated reference to this episode, as evidence of rapidly spreading (and Internet-enabled!) social predation among teens. Of course, they are compelled to acknowledge, in passing, that no authorities managed to find the alleged inflammatory Web site, but you get the idea: Kids are scary!

And those computers! Most of the time, the mere existence of the Internet seems intolerable to these culture marms. They repeatedly recount the horrifying revelation that Whitehouse.com is a gateway to a softcore porn site. Beside themselves over the Net's continual overtures to the culture's "dark side," they offer up this thumbnail account of how things have changed: "Thirty years ago, if you were the most alienated kid on your block...you would have a hard time finding other kids like yourself. As a result, there was a pull back to the mainstream, the normalizing influence of social support. But now? Today you can log on to any number of Web sites and chat rooms and find validation for your alienation, your rage, and your antisocial fantasies. How about logging onto alienation.com? It's a real site we visited in an effort to see just how bad things are. They are that bad."

Set aside, for argument's sake, the fact that 25 years ago, I *was* the most alienated kid on my block, and I had no trouble whatsoever finding others like me, seeking out crude music, being titillated with popcult prurience, skipping school, and worse. (And rest assured that this was not because of any especially energetic effort on my part, since I was also spending much of my time getting high.) Set aside, as well, the small epistemological difficulty that once you have your alienation and antisocial fantasies "validated" by other alienated souls, they pretty much, by definition, cease to exist, at least in their most painful forms. Even set aside the consideration that seeking something out "in an effort to see just how bad things are" is not exactly a preferred model of social scientific inquiry.

Consider instead the shudder-inducing site Alienation.com, whose name alone apparently has the talismanic power to summon forth visions of endlessly indulged evil teen impulses. Garbarino and Bedard may have "visited" Alienation.com, but they clearly didn't stay long enough to read the thing. Log onto it and you will be greeted by a posse of blue-tinted spirit-beings, cross-legged and meditating around an orb suspended at eye-level. This, evidently, is an iconic representation of the seek-

ers invited to share their all-too-literal reveries of alienation: "spiritual people whose interests may include new age spirituality, channeling, reincarnation, 4th density, 3rd density, paranormal, metaphysical, altered states of consciousness, spirits, inspiration, psychic ability, prophecies, revelations, spiritual growth, and possibly alien interests such as abductions, ETs, extraterrestrials, ufos, sightings, star child, and starpeople." In other words, not a baggy-trousered or Goth-addled teen in sight—unless, of course, you count the star children.

There's a very particular irony to this clumsy oversight (in addition, that is, to the troubling one of a pair of self-styled researchers in a prestigious Ivy League school not bothering to deploy their own powers of literacy). All of the pseudoclinical forays into alleged teen ghastliness in *Parents Under Siege* are set quite didactically in relief beside the authors' serene Buddhist spiritual pretensions. Garbarino and Bedard have much more in common with the keepers of Alienation.com than they would ever imagine: It seems that they spent two weeks in a workshop with the Dalai Lama, and are deeply impressed with the notion of applying the Buddhist principle of "mindfulness" to the rounds of parenting and family life. This is one of the less objectionable detours in *Parents Under Siege,* though it does inspire a certain inadvertent sympathy for the Dalai Lama, who, Lord knows, has troubles enough of his own.

Yet you desperately wish, across the many alarmist pages of *Parents Under Siege, The Maturity Myth,* and their many literary cousins, that there was a different sort of "mindfulness" at work on behalf of younger Americans. Teens and young adults do have legitimate troubles, after all, but most of them have more to do with the behavior of the adults in their world. In addition to child poverty, two of the most salient "risk factors" that can determine teen maladjustment—child abuse and divorce—show no signs of a long-term downturn.

For all the hysteria over schoolyard shootings and the death-dealing culture of Goth rock and video games, 16 school-age victims were killed in violent crime incidents (including suicides, and one victim of something called "Fragile X Syndrome") on or near schools over the 2000–2001 academic year; 19 violent deaths, including suicides, occurred on or near school grounds the year before. Meanwhile, abusive adults still kill children at the remarkably high rate of five fatalities a *day*—and even so, a study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found in 1999 that deaths stemming from child abuse were being underreported by an estimated rate of 60 percent. A curious time, all in all, for Garbarino and Bedard to insist that the "socially toxic environment" of North America mandates that kids be subject to "*more* rather than less adult supervision, *more* rather than less intensive parenting, to reduce susceptibility to negative peer influences, to negative mass media influences, to the low self-esteem generated at school." To quote a non-Buddhist homily, charity begins at home. ◘

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their own war against fundamentalist guerrillas in Afghanistan.

At any rate, while the Ayatollahs and Soviets certainly deserved Daniels' ire, the American government hadn't exactly refrained from askin' nobody for nothin'. Most notably, it had asked Iranians to tolerate the brutal regime of the Shah, then sheltered him after he was overthrown—not unlike the Taliban's willingness to shelter Osama bin Laden, come to think of it. That doesn't justify hostage-taking, of course, but one suspects that in the Iranian students' minds, they too were telling Uncle Sam to leave their, um, long-bearded country boys alone.

Daniels stumbled into yet more contradictions in the ensuing years. "Uneasy Rider '88" recast his first hit's hero as a good ol' boy getting stuck in a gay bar. And 1990's "Simple Man" declared war on the people who once had helped him get stoned in the morning: "If I had my way with people selling dope/I'd take a big, tall tree and a short piece of rope/I'd hang 'em up high and let 'em swing 'til the sun goes down." By 2001, Daniels was willing to blame the September 11 attacks on drugs, homosexuality, and music "fit for nothing but a garbage can," among other secular forces, writing on his Web site that "we've shaken our fist in God's face for too long."

You never know where a longhaired redneck is going to end up, politically speak- »

Debunking Green Myths

An environmentalist gets it right.

Ronald Bailey

The Skeptical Environmentalist: Measuring the Real State of the World, by Bjorn Lomborg, New York: Cambridge University Press, 496 pages, $27.95

MODERN ENVIRONMENTALISM, born of the radical movements of the 1960s, has often made recourse to science to press its claims that the world is going to hell in a handbasket. But this environmentalism has never really been a matter of objectively describing the world and calling for the particular social policies that the description implies.

Environmentalism is an ideology, very much like Marxism, which pretended to base its social critique on a "scientific" theory of economic relations. Like Marxists, environmentalists have had to force the facts to fit their theory. Environmentalism is an ideology in crisis: The massive, accumulating contradictions between its pretensions and the actual state of the world can no longer be easily explained away.

The publication of *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, a magnificent and important book by a former member of Greenpeace, deals a major blow to that ideology by superbly documenting a response to environmental doomsaying. The author, Bjorn Lomborg, is an associate professor of statistics at the University of Aarhus in Denmark. On a trip to the United States a few years ago, Lomborg picked up a copy of *Wired* that included an article about the late "doomslayer" Julian Simon.

Simon, a professor of business administration at the University of Maryland, claimed that by most measures, the lot of humanity is improving and the world's natural environment was not critically imperiled. Lomborg, thinking it would be an amusing and instructive exercise to debunk a "right-wing" anti-environmentalist American, assigned his students the project of finding the "real" data that would contradict Simon's outrageous claims.

Lomborg and his students discovered that Simon was essentially right, and that the most famous environmental alarmists (Stanford biologist Paul Ehrlich, Worldwatch Institute founder Lester Brown, former Vice President Al Gore, *Silent Spring* author Rachel Carson) and the leading environmentalist lobbying groups (Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund, Friends of the Earth) were wrong. It turns out that the natural environment is in good shape, and the prospects of humanity are actually quite good.

Lomborg begins with "the Litany" of environmentalist doom, writing: "We are all familiar with the Litany....Our resources are running out. The population is ever growing, leaving less and less to eat. The air and water are becoming ever more polluted. The planet's species are becoming extinct in vast numbers.... The world's ecosystem is breaking down....We all know the Litany and have heard it so often that yet another repetition is, well, almost reassuring." Lomborg notes that there is just one problem with the Litany: "It does not seem to be backed up by the available evidence."

Lomborg then proceeds to demol-

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ish the Litany. He shows how, time and again, ideological environmentalists misuse, distort, and ignore the vast reams of data that contradict their dour visions. In the course of *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, Lomborg demonstrates that the environmentalist lobby is just that, a collection of interest groups that must hype doom in order to survive monetarily and politically.

Lomborg notes, "As the industry and farming organizations have an obvious interest in portraying the environment as just-fine and no-need-to-do-anything, the environmental organizations also have a clear interest in telling us that the environment is in a bad state, and that we need to act now. And the worse they can make this state appear, the easier it is for them to convince us we need to spend more money on the environment rather than on hospitals, kindergartens, etc. Of course, if we were equally skeptical of both sorts of organization there would be less of a problem. But since we tend to treat environmental organizations with much less skepticism, this might cause a grave bias in our understanding of the state of the world." Lomborg's book amply shows that our understanding of the state of the world is indeed biased.

The environmentalist lobby is just that, a collection of interest groups that must hype doom in order to survive.

So what is the real state of humanity and the planet?

Human life expectancy in the developing world has more than doubled in the past century, from 31 years to 65. Since 1960, the average amount of food per person in the developing countries has increased by 38 percent, and although world population has doubled, the percentage of malnourished poor people has fallen globally from 35 percent to 18 percent, and will likely fall further over the next decade, to 12 percent. In real terms, food costs a third of what it did in the 1960s. Lomborg points out that increasing food production trends show no sign of slackening in the future.

What about air pollution? Completely uncontroversial data show that concentrations of sulfur dioxide are down 80 percent in the U.S. since 1962, carbon monoxide levels are down 75 percent since 1970, nitrogen oxides are down 38 percent since 1975, and ground level ozone is down 30 percent since 1977. These trends are mirrored in all developed countries.

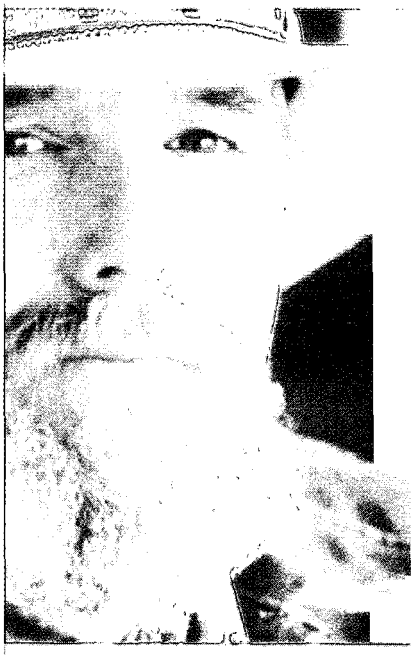
Lomborg shows that claims of rapid deforestation are vastly exaggerated. One United Nations Food and Agriculture survey found that globally, forest cover has been reduced by a minuscule 0.44 percent since 1961. The World Wildlife Fund claims that two-thirds of the world's forests have been lost since the dawn of agriculture; the reality is that the world still has 80 percent of its forests. What about the Brazilian rainforests? Eighty-six percent remain uncut, and the rate of clearing is falling. Lomborg also debunks the widely circulated claim that the world will soon lose up to half of its species. In fact, the best evidence indicates that 0.7 percent of species might be lost in the next 50 years if nothing is done. And of course, it is unlikely that nothing will be done.

Finally, Lomborg shows that global warming caused by burning fossil fuels is unlikely to be a catastrophe. Why? First, because actual measured temperatures aren't increasing nearly as fast as the computer climate models say they should be—in fact, any increase is likely to be at the low end of the predictions, and no one thinks that would be a disaster. Second, even in the unlikely event that temperatures were to increase substantially, it will be far less costly and more environmentally sound to adapt to

ing: Willie Nelson campaigns for Ralph Nader, Charlie Daniels sounds like Jerry Falwell. But before more liberal readers write Daniels off as an utter know-nothing, I should quote another part of his 9/11 rant: "The vast majority of the Middle Eastern citizens came to this country for the same reasons our forefathers did, to escape repression and have a better life. They deplore this atrocity as much as we do."

A lot has been said about love of country in the past few months. Surely one of the most lovable things about America is the particularly vibrant set of paradoxes it's given us to suss out. That, and the music. ☐

Associate Editor Jesse Walker (jwalker@reason.com) is the author of Rebels on the Air: An Alternative History of Radio in America (NYU Press).



the changes rather than institute draconian cuts in fossil fuel use. The best calculations show that adapting to global warming would cost $5 trillion over the next century. By comparison, substantially cutting back on fossil fuel emissions in the manner suggested by the Kyoto Protocol would cost between $107 and $274 trillion over the same period. (Keep in mind that the current yearly U.S. gross domestic product is $10 trillion.) Such costs would mean that people living in developing countries would lose over 75 percent of their expected increases in income over the next century. That would be not only a human tragedy, but an environmental one as well, since poor people generally have little time for environmental concerns.

Where does Lomborg fall short? He clearly understands that increasing prosperity is the key to improving human and environmental health, but he often takes for granted the institutions of property and markets that make progress and prosperity possible. His analysis, as good as it is, fails to identify the chief cause of most environmental problems. In most cases, imperiled resources such as fisheries and airsheds are in open-access commons where the incentive is for people to take as much as possible of the resource before someone else beats them to it. Since they don't own the resource, they have no incentive to protect and conserve it.

Clearly, regulation has worked to improve the state of many open-access commons in developed countries such as the U.S. Our air and streams are much cleaner than they were 30 years ago, in large part due to things like installing catalytic converters on automobiles and building more municipal sewage treatment plants. Yet there is good evidence that assigning private property rights to these resources would have resulted in a faster and cheaper cleanup. Lomborg's analysis would have been even stronger had he more directly taken on ideological environmentalism's bias against markets. But perhaps that is asking for too much in an already superb book.

"Things are *better* now," writes Lomborg, "but they are still not *good* enough." He's right. Only continued economic growth will enable the 800 million people who are still malnourished to get the food they need; only continued economic growth will let the 1.2 billion who don't have access to clean water and sanitation obtain those amenities. It turns out that ideological environmentalism, with its hostility to economic growth and technological progress, is the biggest threat to the natural environment and to the hopes of the poorest people in the world for achieving better lives.

"The very message of the book," Lomborg concludes, is that "children born today—in both the industrialized world and the developing countries—will live longer and be healthier, they will get more food, a better education, a higher standard of living, more leisure time and far more possibilities—without the global environment being destroyed. And that is a beautiful world." ◻

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The Potato Whisperer

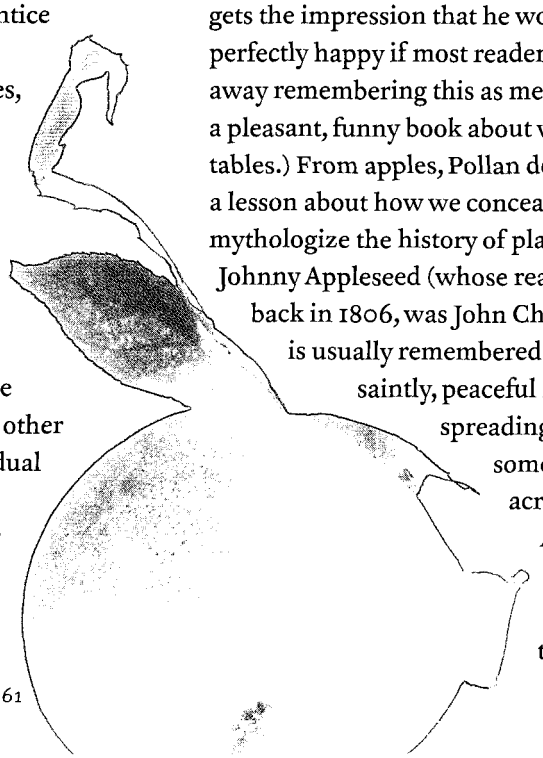
Surprising wisdom from a greenish gardener

Todd Seavey

Botany of Desire, by Michael Pollan, New York: Random House, 271 pages, $24.95

IN *BOTANY OF DESIRE*, Michael Pollan examines the coevolution of plants and human beings from what he acknowledges is "a somewhat unconventional angle: I take the plant's point of view seriously." The plants whose perspectives he adopts include apples, tulips, marijuana, and genetically engineered potatoes, all of which have been found in his own garden at one time or another.

Human beings tend to think of themselves as the uncontested rulers of the natural world, especially when lording it over subjects unlikely to fight back, such as fruits and vegetables. Pollan's central insight is that those plants aren't as passive as they seem. In fact, in their mindless way, they're every bit as selfish about the relationship as we are. Plants use various means to entice animals to do the work of spreading plant genes, whether the animals are human farmers or pollen-bearing honeybees. "In a coevolutionary bargain like the one struck by the bee and the apple tree," Pollan writes, "the two parties act on each other to advance their individual interests but wind up trading favors: food for the bee, transportation for the apple genes."



If you're a plant, offering such rewards as sweetness, nutritional value, or intoxication is a great way to get animals to plant your seeds, give you water, or destroy the weeds that surround you. Being domesticated further increases your odds of survival and your likelihood of having descendants. Just ask apples. Now we grow Newtown Pippins, Baldwins, Golden Russets, and Jonathans, all derived from the small, bitter, wild apples that originated in Kazakhstan.

Pollan notes that this perspective runs counter to both the usual scientific-industrial narrative about our relationship to nature, in which we take what we want from the world and thus improve it, and the usual environmentalist fable, in which we exploit a passive nature until it collapses, destroying ourselves in the process. In reality, it takes two to tango, and sometimes your partner is a potato.

Each of the four plants Pollan examines yields a fable about this dance, though Pollan presents his morals very gently and subtly. (One gets the impression that he would be perfectly happy if most readers came away remembering this as merely a pleasant, funny book about vegetables.) From apples, Pollan derives a lesson about how we conceal or mythologize the history of plants. Johnny Appleseed (whose real name, back in 1806, was John Chapman) is usually remembered as a saintly, peaceful figure spreading wholesome food across the American frontier. There's just one problem with the story: Two centuries ago, people didn't grow apples for food. They grew them to make hard cider. Johnny Appleseed's contemporaries loved him because he was bringing them a cheap means of getting drunk.

Pollan expresses this more elaborately, drawing on Greek mythology and a little Nietzsche for his metaphors. Johnny Appleseed, he writes, was "the American Dionysus," heir to the wild god who, in a mixed blessing, "brought civilization the gift of wine...the antithesis of Apollo, god of clear boundaries, order, and light, of man's firm control over nature."

From tulips, Pollan draws the lesson that while we go to great lengths to possess beauty—even creating unstable, speculative markets in ultra-expensive tulip bulbs, back in 17th-century Holland—flowers are quietly engaged in an evolutionary competition to catch the eye of creatures like us, often in order to announce that there is fruit to be eaten (and thus seeds to be scattered) nearby. The results can be downright embarrassing, as with Chinese gardeners' gradual development of peonies that look a bit too much like human female reproductive organs for comfort.

From marijuana, and from drugs in general, Pollan thinks we may learn far more than most straight-laced members of society are willing to admit. From opium to hashish to peyote, plants have given us access to altered and occasionally enlightening states of consciousness, thus increasing the odds that they will be cultivated. (Marijuana fans should be cheered by Pollan's suggestion that ever more potent strains of weed will continue to win the evolutionary race, »

Gilligan vs. Homer Simpson

Pop culture gets globalized.

Nick Gillespie

WHEN THE *Los Angeles Times* named Paul Cantor's *Gilligan Unbound: Pop Culture in the Age of Globalization* (Rowman & Littlefield) one of the best books of 2001, it was almost certainly the first time that such a commendation was lavished on a tome dedicated to a videotape machine. "IN MEMORY OF MY DEVOTED VCR, SONY SLV-240/July 20, 1994–December 29, 2000," the author announces at the start of his study of the most famous castaways in history.

Cantor, an occasional contributor to **reason**, is a professor of English at the University of Virginia and is best known as a Shakespeare scholar. As his cheeky dedication suggests, he has a sense of humor, and *Gilligan Unbound* is, unlike much of what goes under the rubric "cultural studies," both accessible and a pleasure to read on the sentence level.

That's not to say the book is light, however: Cantor turns a sharp eye and a keen understanding of politics, economics, and history on the deeper significance of not just *Gilligan's Island*, but also *Star Trek*, *The Simpsons*, and *The X-Files*. In doing so, the *Los Angeles Times* noted, he goes far toward "uncovering a new thesis about where American pop culture is heading."

reason Editor-in-Chief Nick Gillespie talked with Cantor in late November.

reason: Summarize your book's thesis.

Paul Cantor: It's about the representation of globalization in American TV. I compare shows from the 1960s and the 1990s and I contrast what I call eras of "national television" and "global television."

In the shows from the '60s, globalization takes the form of Americanization of the world. *Gilligan's Island*, for instance, suggests that you can take a representative group of Americans, drop them anywhere on the planet, and they'll end up recreating an image of the United States. You see all the elements of specifically American self-confidence in *Star Trek*, too. There, American democracy is "galacticized." In one out of two episodes, Capt. Kirk shows up and ruins any regime he encounters, especially if it smacks of aristocracy or theocracy.

reason: What changes in the '90s?

Cantor: In the more recent shows, you see the reverse process at work. Now, it's America that is being globalized. In *Gilligan* and *Star Trek*, you see American power being projected outward. In *The Simpsons* and *The X-Files*, you see outside forces transforming America. *The Simpsons* views this comically and positively; in *The X-Files*, it's tragic and dark.

The striking thing about *The Simpsons* is how an American small town has been changed. The show obviously hearkens back to situation comedies like *Father Knows Best*, which was also set in a town called Springfield. But you never would have had Apu Nahasapeemapetilon running the grocery store in that Springfield. *The X-Files* definitely moves away from the idea that America is in control of the world, or that the government can be trusted to protect its citizens. It's just the opposite—there are all these dark conspiracies, somehow connected with aliens or the government itself, that are secretly ruling the world.

reason: What explains the shift between the '60s and '90s shows?

Cantor: The main thing is the end of the Cold War, which was obviously present in *Star Trek*, but also in *Gilligan*—there are all sorts of space-race episodes, for instance. *The Simpsons* debuted as a regular series six months after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Once the Soviet threat was muted, people were less inclined to rely on a national government, to turn to it as their savior, and more inclined to see things from foreign lands as not necessarily threatening—though *The X-Files* clearly reflects ambivalence about this. These shows are in some sense about the end of the nation-state.

reason: You wrote *Gilligan Unbound* long before September 11. Is the nation-state back?

Cantor: People feel threatened again and they're turning back to the nation-state, at least in the short term. But in fact, terrorism may be one sign of the end of the nation-state, as Jean-Marie Guehenno suggested in his brilliant 1993 book, *The End of the Nation-State*. In fact, the underlying question we're facing now is whether a nation-state can deal with an enemy that is *not* a nation-state.

It's too early to tell how that will play out, but I think it's clear that we're moving into an era where economics will trump politics, which is an important way of thinking about globalization. ◻

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› no matter how hard the law struggles to eradicate them.) Pollan informs us that the noted pot smoker Carl Sagan wrote an essay, under the pseudonym Mr. X, defending the validity of those notorious drug-induced revelations that can't quite be articulated the next morning. (Sagan also wrote the revelation-themed novel *Contact*, though its casual references to legalized cannabis somehow never made it into the film version.)

Pollan even wonders if Plato's metaphysics might have been drug-induced, given that the Greeks used psychedelics and that Plato wrote, in terms that will sound familiar to pot-smoking readers everywhere, about focusing one's attention on an object with such intensity that it eventually seems to become the ideal, universal form of that object, not just an individual shoe, hand, chair, or roach clip. (Well, Plato didn't mention the roach clip.) The late novelist Iris Murdoch also wrote about the importance of seeing things accurately, with an artist's attention to detail, and about the importance of Plato's metaphysics as an approach to understanding God. It's a shame that she, Sagan, Plato, and Pollan never got stoned together and wrote a fascinating book about the experience.

Marijuana fans should be cheered by Pollan's suggestion that ever more potent strains of weed will continue to win the evolutionary race.

Finally, from the potato, Pollan derives an even more politically charged lesson, noting that the risky new business of genetic engineering is not just the inevitable direction of progress but a side effect of society's demand for uniformity and predictability. Potatoes, which centuries ago were "thought to be causes of leprosy and immorality" and thus rarely grown in Europe, gradually came to be relied on to produce very predictable, easily grown crops. By expecting our McDonald's french fries and our potato chips to look the same time after time, notes Pollan, we consumers are unwittingly necessitating the type of agriculture that produces vast, uniform growing fields—monocultures—in which only one specific type of plant is grown, with as little variation as possible in its appearance and texture.

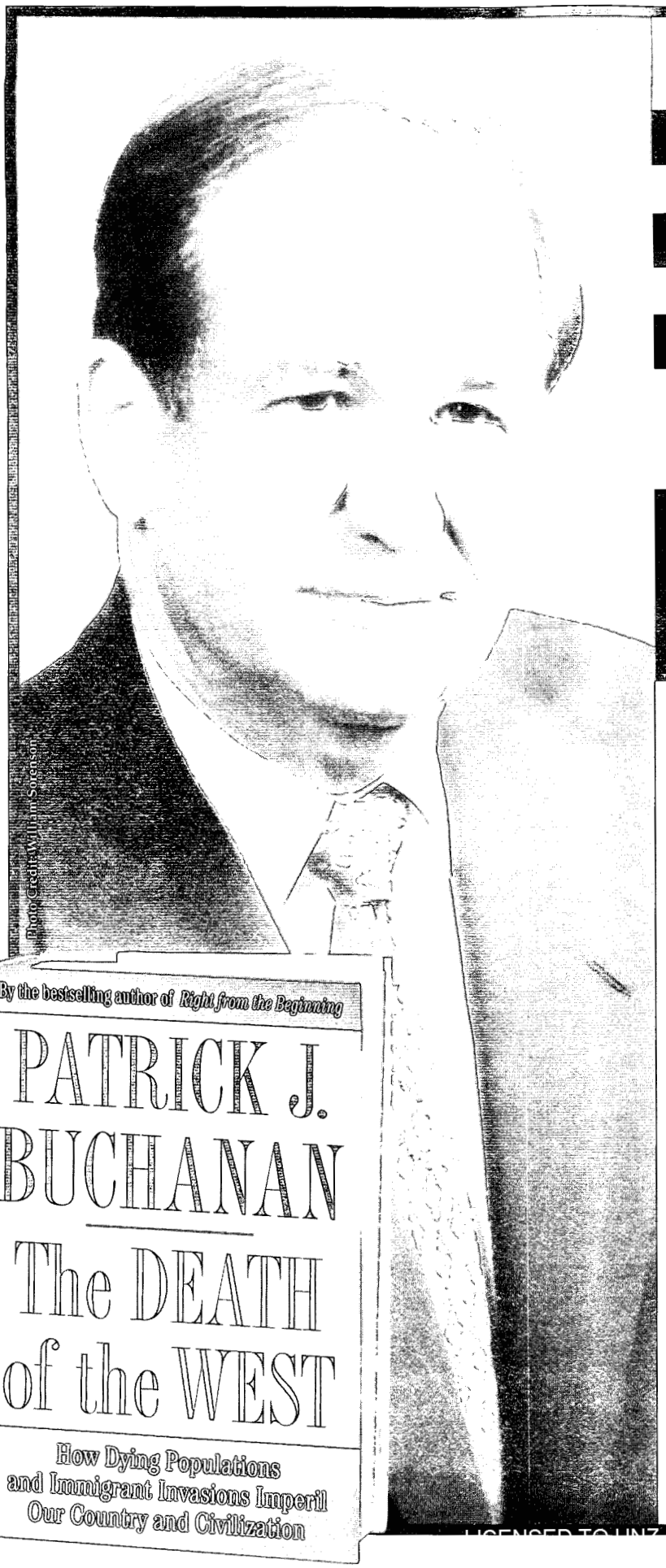
Genetic engineering, in Pollan's view, is just the latest attempt to impose man-made predictability on the wild and diverse plant world. Preferring a bit of chaos and variety, Pollan leans toward organic agriculture and, at the end of the book, decides that when he makes potato salad he won't use the genetically modified potatoes that he grew in his own garden.

At this point, Pollan's own philosophy becomes a bit more apparent, casting a new light on his use of Greek god imagery, his denunciation of greedy tulip speculation, and his fondness for marijuana. Suddenly, it all adds up to a subtle, stealthy promotion of the whole green agenda: paganism, anti-capitalism, hemp, and organic farming. A more paranoid reviewer might even detect a whiff of Gaia worship in this whole idea of looking at things from the plants' perspective.

Stereotypes aside, though, Pollan is a moderate green, with an appreciation for trade-offs and mutually beneficial exchanges. He even manages to sympathize a bit with the geneticists at the giant agro corporation Monsanto, respecting their accomplishments as his fellow "gardeners" and clearly enjoying his visit to the high-tech Monsanto labs. (More radical, and more typical, is an opinion espoused by a Maine organic farmer whom Pollan interviews: "If there's a source of evil in agriculture... its name is Monsanto.")

Pollan sometimes engages a bit too freely in metaphorical talk about plants planning and strategizing and "wanting" their genes spread. He knows—and states outright—that evolution is just a weeding-out process, the elimination of some organisms and the reproduction of others, not a conscious striving by species to win the Darwinian lottery. But we live in a world where most people are scientifically illiterate—where most religious people think the guiding hand of a Creator is necessary for evolution to occur (if they believe in the process at all), where most secularists think of evolution as having a purposive "direction" to it. Given that, Pollan should perhaps choose his words more carefully. Yet an author can't be expected to write his way around every possible misinterpretation of his book. *Botany of Desire* provides more than enough enlightenment to compensate for any minor drawbacks. ◘

Todd Seavey lives in New York City and is writing a book titled Conservatism for Punks.



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PATRICK J. BUCHANAN

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Patrick J. Buchanan asks:

Can our America survive?

★★★★★★★★★★★★

The facts are clear:

- There are 30 million foreign-born in the US today, and more than 9 million illegal aliens; more than the populations of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut combined
- Islam has already surpassed Catholicism as the world's largest religion
- European-Americans are a minority in America's most populous state, California
- By 2050, only 10% of the world's people will be of European descent

In *The Death of the West*, Patrick J. Buchanan takes an unflinching look at the frightening decline in Western culture and power. In this timely, provocative, brutally honest new book, he says we must face the truth ... or we'll soon be reading America's last rites.

"Buchanan is an honest writer who opens his mind and psyche in a way few people can .... He minces nothing except an occasional opponent."

—*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

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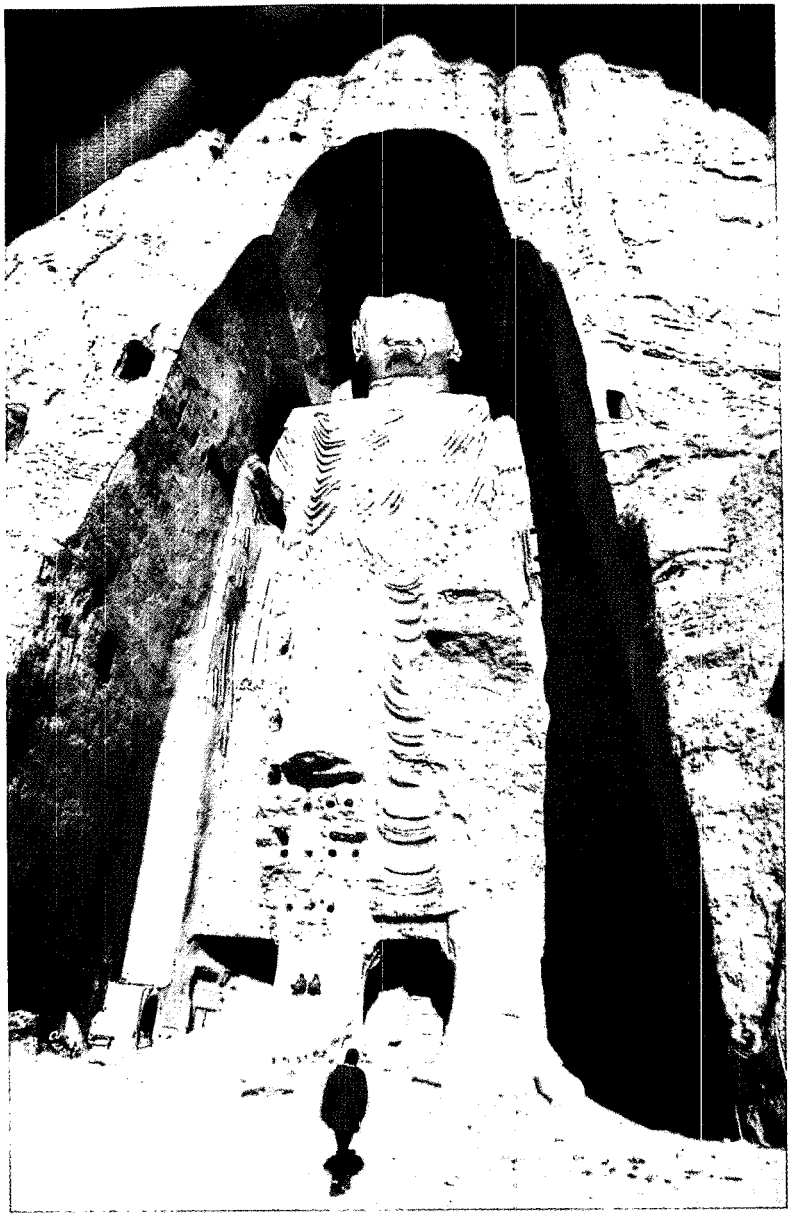
Charles Paul Freund



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SHOULD THE BUDDHAS destroyed last spring by the Taliban be rebuilt? A group called the New 7 Wonders Society wants to recreate the bigger of the two blasted statues, with the support of a U.N.-recognized Swiss institute concerned with Afghan antiquities. The society intends to show that "an act of international destruction cannot erase the memory of those things which are valuable to humanity and its heritage."

Yet humanity's memory of the statues is, to put it mildly, mixed. They were largely unknown except to specialists in Gandharan art, and were not always admired even by them. Students of Buddhist art generally preferred Sri Lankan representations. Travelers despised the statues. One 19th century description says that the sight of them "sickens"; they were a "monstrous flaccid bulk" and a "negation of sense." That they'd once been used as target practice by Muslim armies was regarded as no loss. As late as 1973, they were pronounced "grotesque."

"Those things which are valuable to humanity and its heritage," it seems, constitute a checklist subject to dramatic revision. How did the Buddhas get on the list? Perhaps because their destruction was a perfect spectacle of barbarism. The Taliban also destroyed thousands of artifacts in Kabul's museum, hammering at statues for days. But there was no alerted audience, no press attention, no video record, no spectacle, and now, no program to recreate any of them.

American Ingenuity: A Key to Future Security

John Raisian is director and senior fellow at the Hoover Institution.

In a crisis, such as the terrorist attacks on September 11, it is natural to look to our government leaders to set the course. But **we'd be making a terrible mistake if we relied too heavily on top-down political solutions, ignoring our real strength, the decentralized ingenuity of the American people.**

Consider just one example. In the weeks after the attacks, we wrestled with ways of improving airport security. In Congress, two fundamentally different possibilities emerged. Either we could federalize airport security, making it the job of the government, or we could permit airport security to remain in the private sector, using the government to mandate higher standards, to delegate the responsibility for meeting such standards to private security firms, and to monitor the performance of private sector solutions. Which methodology should we rely on for safety in the air? One similar to the United States Postal Service, a model that has regularly been criticized for costly and inefficient service that too often proves unreliable? Or the competitive alternative that led creative individuals to introduce FedEx and UPS?

In the end, Congress chose the former. I realize that we are in a crisis and that the American public looks to government's leadership to assure our well-being, but I am dismayed that we continue to settle for inferior solutions because they are seen as politically superior. Why should we settle for less? The challenge for our government is to stop ducking its responsibility, instead dedicating itself to finding the best solution to the problem of airport security—uncompromised safety at the lowest cost possible—and to other problems like it that are sure to arise. Overwhelmingly, the best solutions will be competitive solutions.

Economists around the world generally understand and applaud the workings of competition and private markets. It is difficult to make the case for centralized decision making of the kind present within socialism, certainly for the kind of command economies that once dominated the Eastern bloc. We should be suspicious of government solutions that entail government agencies and institutions directly managing an enterprise. We need to expand the ingenuity of the American citizenry at large, encouraging the development of solutions in the marketplace. Is this not the order of the day?

It is natural for us to turn to our government leaders in a time of crisis. But it is not a foregone conclusion that our citizenry expects the government to centralize more of the workings of our society. Over the longer term, we must look to the ingenuity of our people to address the many elements of this crisis. **The leadership we need should create institutions structured to help us accomplish our aims, not have us sit back and expect government "engineers" to solve our problems.** Decentralized activity can respond to shortcomings with a speed and entrepreneurial energy that government can seldom match. Such approaches will have a great deal to contribute to our nation in the days ahead.

— John Raisian

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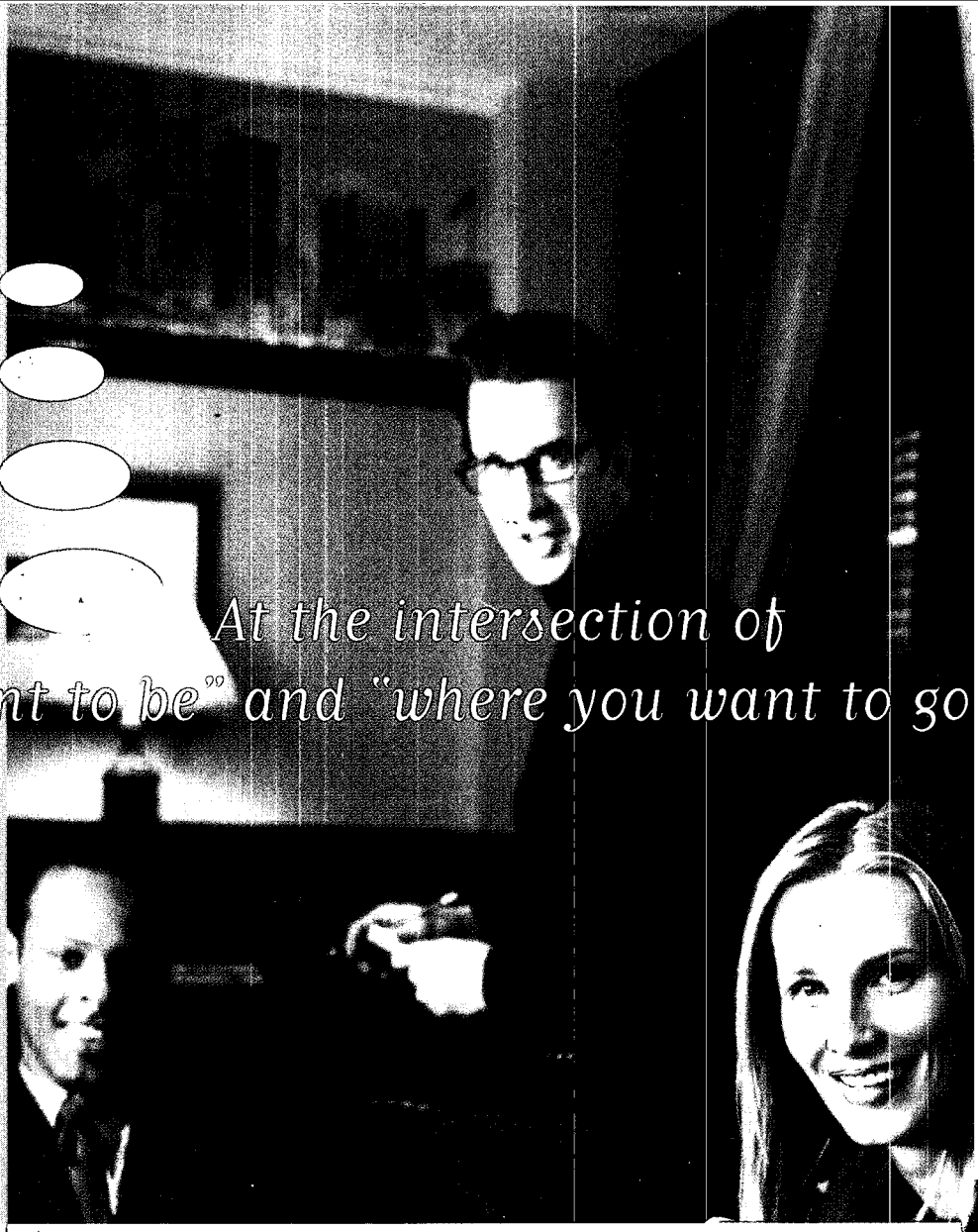

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